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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FROM A CYCLONE OF FEAR TO A SPIRAL OF RESPECT: POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN THE TREATMENT OF WIFE ABUSE

BY

DEBRA DAWN McDOUGALL

A thesis

submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1993

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DEGREE: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1993

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled FROM A CYCLONE OF FEAR TO A SPIRAL OF RESPECT: POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN THE TREATMENT OF WIFE ABUSE submitted by DEBRA McDOUGALL in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY.

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Date: October 4, 1993

DEDICATION

To the family I grew up with: My father, Dalton (February 19, 1925 - January 21, 1993); my mother, Audrey; and my brother, Cal; who provided me with an environment of love and respect and who instilled in me a belief in the value and importance of family.

To the family I continue to grow with: Frank, Tara, and Meryk who surround me with love and laughter each day and who continually inspire me with their sense of wonder and curiosity.

To the women and men who courageously participated in this study, sharing their journeys of pain and healing in the hope that others might benefit.

Abstract

Although abuse of women by their intimate partners dates back centuries it is only in recent years that public attention has been drawn to the problem. The number of emergency shelters serving battered women has increased significantly and, in addition, efforts have been made to take the problem of wife abuse more seriously by increasing the criminal justice response. Treatment programs for men who batter have also been developed in the past decade.

In addition to the media and community attention, there has been a proliferation of research directed toward the problem of wife abuse. Studies have investigated psychosocial factors influencing the victim, the perpetrator, and the relationship, as well as social and cultural issues related to violence against women. To date, however, few studies have examined the process of successful change of batterers, and none were identified which explored the experience of change for both men and women.

The present investigation sought to address this gap. Its purpose was to gain an understanding of the experience of men and women in relationships where men successfully ended abusive behaviour and made significant personal changes. Using grounded theory methodology, five couples were interviewed about their perspectives on the change process that occurred as they successfully moved from an abuse and fear-dominated relationship to one marked by recovery and mutual respect.

The reflections of the ten women and men in the study brought forth two Basic Social Psychological Processes (BSPP) -- **Fear of Difference** and **Respect for Difference**. Categories and sub-categories were identified under each BSPP. A conceptual model was developed describing a downward spiral of abuse or cyclone of fear on one side, reaching a crisis or turning point, then moving upward in a spiral of respect. Categories of sex role socialization, the early relationship, organizing around the abuse,

escalation, and turning point emerged from the abuse-dominated stories. The stories of recovery and change brought forth categories of accepting responsibility, therapy, rebuilding, and ongoing development. During the downward spiral, differences of opinion were threatening as were responses that were different than those prescribed by one's sex role socialization. During the process of recovery it became possible to respond differently. Couples were able to safely "agree to disagree" and move outside of the restraints of sex role prescriptions.

Limitations of the investigation were identified, followed by a discussion of the research and clinical implications of the findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank some of the many people who made it possible for me to complete this project.

To Dr. Don Sawatzky, my dissertation supervisor, for his support and encouragement of my clinical development over the years and for his challenging curiosity throughout the present study.

To Dr. Mary Ann Bibby, for providing valuable guidance with regard to grounded theory methodology, for her thoughtful and thought-provoking comments, and for her warm encouragement and unwavering enthusiasm.

To Dr. Leslie Tutty, for acting as my "Calgary connection" and for her particular clinical and research expertise in the area.

To my examining committee, Dr. Rosemary Liburd, Dr. Janice Blakey, and Dr. Lorna Cammaert, for their interesting comments, questions, and suggestions.

The willingness of local agencies to support and assist this research is greatly appreciated. In particular, Susan Gardiner, Executive Director of The Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter; Frank McGrath, Director of the Men's Crisis Service of the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter; Dolores D'Amour, Executive Director of the Pastoral Institute; and Robbie Babbins-Wagner, Clinical Director of the Pastoral Institute are acknowledged.

To Pat Hatfield, for her enthusiastic support of the project and valuable comments regarding the evolving model and to Lois Sapsford for assisting with the "technology" of data management.

To Pat Nilsson, for transcribing the interviews and showing tremendous efficiency, patience, and flexibility over the past two years. To Brian Nilsson, for helping me to stay "on line" and for troubleshooting, formatting, and printing several drafts of the dissertation.

To my friends and colleagues at The Family Psychology Centre and at the AADAC Adolescent Treatment Centre for supporting my research and for keeping a place for me at work during my absences.

To Connie McDonald, for sharing many potentially stimulating, but unfortunately interrupted, conversations over the past six years and for helping me to discover the fascinating parallels, as well as important distinctions, between pregnancy and research; spit-up and feedback; and nursery school and graduate school.

To my friends and family whose support and encouragement made it possible for me to continue this project when it seemed more than I could handle. The practical assistance and emotional reassurance provided by friends and family in Calgary, Edmonton, Sparwood, Duchess, and New Brunswick was invaluable. A special thank-you is extended to Betty and Jerry Carter. The excellent food and lodging as well as child and dog care that was so generously offered during my trips to Edmonton was greatly appreciated.

To my daughters Tara and Meryk, who showed understanding and sensitivity beyond their years during the times when I was immersed in my work. To my mother, Audrey, whose strength and ability to be there for me during a time of her own intense personal crisis stands as an inspiration to me. And to Frank, for remaining beside me throughout this long journey, always believing in the positive possibilities of challenges.

And finally, my deepest appreciation goes out to the women and men who participated in this study. It was a privilege to have been allowed "into" their stories and I am grateful that they took the time and showed the courage to reflect on their experiences in such a thoughtful manner. It is my sincere hope that others will benefit from that which they so willingly offered.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background to the Problem

In the year 1993 it is no longer necessary to try to "prove" that abuse of women by their intimate partners is a significant problem. In light of the political and media attention given to the plight of battered wives over the past few years, only those whose heads are buried very deeply could continue to claim that it is not a serious issue. Determination of the actual number of women who are abused by their partners remains exceedingly difficult, however, as many people both inside and outside of abusive relationships adhere to the strong code of silence that shrouds any problems that occur within the sacred walls of home and particularly those between marriage partners. Although estimates of incidence and prevalence rates vary, it is clear that women continue to be psychologically and physically abused by their partners at an alarming rate. A recent Canadian survey (Smith, 1987) found that 14.4% of women reported being physically abused in the previous year with 36.4% admitting to ever having been abused by a husband, partner, boyfriend, or date. Another Canadian survey (Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1987) found that 10% of men committed at least one serious offense against his female partner (such as kicking, biting, hitting with a fist or object, using or threatening with a knife or gun) which, had it occurred outside the home, could have resulted in an assault charge. Given that these high figures likely still underestimate the rates in the population at large, the magnitude of the problem of abuse of women is enormous.

The significant efforts of those who have sought to bring the problem of wife abuse into the open have resulted in some changes in recent years. The number of shelters for battered women quadrupled in the years between 1979 and 1989

with 308 shelters offering protection to women and children (MacLeod, 1989). In addition, the criminal and judicial systems have attempted to respond to the issues (Jaffe et al., 1986). Police are now given special training and are encouraged to lay charges in cases of wife assault. Also, in the last decade, the courts have become more willing to treat violence against women in the home as assault, enforcing the laws that, for years, were ignored (MacLeod, 1989). It is essential that ongoing support of and improvements to crisis-oriented services that offer protection to battered women and their children remain a priority. The complexity of the problem demands a broader response, however, a response that considers the long-term needs of families. One critical aspect of this broader picture is the provision of service aimed at assisting the batterer to change.

Ninety-one percent of battered women interviewed in a P.E.I. survey identified professional help for their assailants as a need for them (Meredith & Conway, 1984, cited in MacLeod, 1989). Even after taking the first step of leaving an abusive partner, many women find themselves back in the situation. Follow-up records have shown that, despite being warned about the risks, over twenty five percent of women return to their partners after leaving an emergency shelter (Aguirre, 1985; Gondolf, 1988a; S. Gardiner, personal communication, September 1993). Clearly, while support for the victim is necessary, programs must be directed at the perpetrator.

In 1989 there were over one hundred programs in Canada for men who batter (MacLeod, 1989). Some of these were located in correctional institutions, some accepted only court-mandated referrals, others included voluntary as well as involuntary participants, and still others were purely voluntary. Evaluation of batterer treatment programs has

typically shown difficulties associated with low recruitment, high drop-out rates, and high recidivism (Gondolf, 1991; Hamberger & Hastings, 1990;). MacLeod (1989) also points to the lack of consistent contact with the female partners of the batterers during or after their treatment program and the evaluation focus on change in physically abusive behaviours without consideration of psychological or verbal abuse. Despite the many problems associated with the implementation and evaluation of batterer treatment programs there is, according to Gondolf and Hanneken (1987), a growing core of men who have stopped their abuse and who have made significant personal changes. In an effort to better understand the dynamics associated with this process of "reformation" Gondolf and Hanneken conducted a qualitative study of former batterers (1987). The current study aims to add to this beginning knowledge of the factors associated with "successful" treatment by interviewing men and women about the process of change that occured when the men ended the abuse of their partners.

Need for the Study

The present study was undertaken to address a gap in the research to date. Although issues related to wife abuse have received considerable research attention in the past two decades, there has been little effort directed toward understanding the process of successful change. Gondolf and Hanneken (1987) present one exception in this regard. The bulk of studies have focused on the pathology of the men, the experiences and pathology of the women, the pathology of the abusive relationship, social causes of wife abuse, treatment suggestions, and treatment evaluations. While these studies have broadened our knowledge and added to our understanding of critical issues, many have invited us to accept narrow explanations and, hence, narrow solutions to a tremendously complex problem. That is, studies identifying

particular psychopathology or skills deficits in perpetrators or victims of wife abuse often suggest particular interventions that overlook the important sociopolitical context in which the abuse occurs. It is the goal of this study to move away from the traditional "why" question of empirical science and explore, rather, the question of "how" change happens. It is this researcher's assertion that exploration of the factors associated with successful change will provide useful information for individuals caught in an abusive relationship as well as for the clinicians and theorists who wish to help them.

This study represents a departure from traditional research in this area in three main ways. First, as a grounded theory exploration it allows for a focus on the experience of the research participants and on the process of change that they describe. Theory is generated from the data rather than data fitted into an existing model or framework such as Walker's early work (1979) in which she applied the previously-developed theory of learned helplessness to data on battered women. Much research in the area is also based on the use of questionable assessment instruments and influenced by unstated biases (Breines & Gordon, 1983; Yllo, 1988). A grounded theory study avoids the forcing of responses into categories but, rather, utilizes the actual narratives of the participants in the formation of categories.

Second, the study employs a "salutogenic" orientation that seeks to "explain how it is that people are located at or moving toward the positive end of the health ease / disease continuum" rather than focusing on the factors associated with pathology (Antonovsky, 1979). Studies of wife abuse have typically focused on causal explanations for the abusive dynamics with less emphasis on dissecting and understanding positive outcomes.

Finally, this study includes data from interviews with the partners of abusive men. Although contact with wives to verify the interviews with the reformed batterers was undertaken by Gondolf and Hanneken (1987) it would appear that no studies have included the spouses' perceptions and experiences of the change process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the experience of men and women in relationships where the husbands were previously abusive and who have stopped the abuse and shown significant personal changes. Grounded theory methodology allows for both description of the phenomena under study as well as explanation of the phenomena through data-driven theory formation.

Data were gathered through interviews with five couples who met the following criteria: 1) The male partner had engaged in individual and/or group therapy to address the problem of spouse abuse. 2) The couple continued to identify themselves as partners (though they may not necessarily live together). 3) Both parties agreed that the abuse had stopped. 4) They were able and willing to reflect on and articulate a description of their experiences.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter one presents a brief background to the current study and identifies the purpose and rationale for selection of the research question and grounded theory methodology.

Chapter two addresses the main issues in the area with a summary of current literature. Information regarding definition and incidence of wife abuse is presented, followed by a summary of research which focuses on individual, systemic, and sociocultural explanations of the problem. The final section addresses issues related to intervention.

Chapter three provides a summary explanation of grounded theory methodology and outlines the application of the methodology in the present study. A description of the process of participant selection, data collection, and data analysis is presented. The ten informants are introduced.

In Chapter four the findings of the study are offered with an elaboration of the proposed conceptual model. The two core categories of **Fear of Difference** and **Respect for Difference** are described.

Chapter five discusses the new understandings that were gained from the study and compares and contrasts the findings of this study with those that currently predominate the professional literature. Limitations of the study are examined. Recommendations for future research are put forth.

CHAPTER TWO
Literature Review
Introduction

As recently as twenty years ago there was very little written about the problem of wife abuse and virtually no empirical investigation in the area. In the seventies and eighties, however, the significant efforts of the women's movement brought public attention to the "private" problem of domestic violence against women. Subsequently, shelters were established to provide a safe environment for women in crisis, changes were instituted in the criminal justice system which reflected a more serious attitude toward wife battering, public education programs were launched, and batterer treatment programs were initiated. Research attention to the area of wife abuse also increased dramatically over that time period leading Hotaling and Sugarman to state in 1986 that "the literature is currently flooded with a host of presumed causes, predictors, and theories on this type of adult domestic violence"(p. 101). This "flood" was evidenced by the fact that these researchers reviewed over 400 empirical studies on husband to wife violence to find a suitable sample for their study of risk markers (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). There is every indication that, in the seven years since that report, research efforts toward understanding the causes, consequences, treatment, and prevention of the problem of wife abuse have continued to expand.

The following review of the literature highlights the main theoretical and treatment perspectives that currently dominate research and clinical work in the area of wife abuse. The review begins with a discussion of definitional issues related to wife abuse followed by a summary of information regarding the incidence and prevalence of the

problem. Next, several explanations for abuse are discussed, organized according to their focus on the individual, the marital system, social learning in the family of origin, and the broader sociocultural context. Finally, a review of recent research addressing treatment issues arising from the individual treatment of abusive men, abused women, and couples who present with the problem of wife abuse, is presented.

Definition

Research in the area of wife abuse is obscured by the variety of ways in which the problem is named. The literature refers to family violence, domestic abuse, marital violence, and spouse abuse, leading to confusion and controversy regarding the meaning and the implications of the terminology. These gender neutral terms have been highly criticized for obscuring "the dimensions of gender and power that are fundamental to understanding wife abuse" (Bograd, 1988, p.13). In addition, feminists have argued that this "masking" of the dimension of gender might lead to biases in how the causes and solutions of wife abuse are conceptualized (Bograd, 1988, p.13).

Variability also exists with respect to definition of the problem. The definition that is most widely referred to is that put forth by Straus and Gelles (1986) who define violence as:

> an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person (p.467).

These authors go on to operationally define "wife beating" as the use of one or more violent acts that are seen as having a relatively high probability of causing injury to a marital partner (Straus & Gelles, 1986).

Examination of the broad range of behaviours associated with physical abuse brings to awareness the power of other behaviours such as threats, criticism, ridicule, and sexual

degradation in the abuse of women by their intimate partners (Adams, 1988; Anderson et al., 1991). Thus, broader definitions have been elaborated which include not only physical but psychological, economical, and sexual abuse as well. Walker's (1979) well-known work with battered women is conducted within the context of the following definition:

> A battered woman is a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behaviour by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights. (p. 15)

Clearly, statistics gained from the application of these two definitions would reflect highly discrepant incidence rates and many researchers are calling for greater standardization in measurement techniques. Others express concern that greater measurement precision might result in decreased sensitivity to the complexity of the issue, however, with a resultant sacrifice of clinical perceptiveness. In this regard the widely used Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) which measures the manner in which individuals respond to conflict situations, including their use of physical violence, throwing objects, use of weapons, and so forth, is criticized for its emphasis on counting and coding the individual acts of violence while overlooking the context in which the actions take place. It is argued that a complex issue such as wife abuse can only be fully understood by examining the sociohistorical and interactional context out of which it arises (Bograd, 1988).

Incidence

It is exceedingly difficult to accurately estimate the incidence of wife abuse. In addition to the above-stated difficulties associated with definition, the problem is typically contained within the walls of the home for a considerable time before any outsiders become aware of it. Even when physical injuries are sustained and medical assistance is sought, the problem often goes unnamed. For

example, one study of emergency room records showed that for twenty-four of twenty-five women treated for injuries resulting from wife abuse, the source of the injuries was not investigated (The Ontario Medical Association, 1988).

Early efforts to determine the magnitude of the problem relied on data obtained from women's shelters, applicants for divorce, police file cases, and social service agencies to arrive at a "guesstimate" of incidence rates. The results varied widely, from an estimated one in ten (MacLeod, 1980) to one in two women being abused by their partners (Walker, 1979). While underscoring the seriousness of the issue, these studies were unable to provide reliable information regarding its extent. Researchers then turned to random sample surveys as an essential avenue to this end.

Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) are credited with undertaking the first national survey of violence in the American family in 1975. Their study involved face-to-face interviews of 2143 men and women aged 18-65. The results of this study showed an annual incidence rate of husband-to-wife violence of 12.1%. These same researchers went on to conduct a second national family violence survey in 1985. This large survey consisted of 3520 telephone interviews and found an 11.3% annual incidence rate of husband-to-wife violence, down slightly from their earlier results (Straus & Gelles, 1986).

In terms of the Canadian picture, there have been no national or provincial surveys undertaken to determine the incidence of wife abuse. Beginning efforts have been made, however, with three Canadian studies offering incidence rates based on city-wide data. In 1981, Brinkerhoff and Lupri surveyed 562 married or cohabitating couples living in Calgary. Their results showed an annual incidence rate of husband-to-wife violence of 24.5% with a 10.8% rate of severe violence. These results were startlingly high and

researchers searched for an explanation. Their primary rationalization focused on the nature of the city studied. That is, Calgary's boomtown characteristics of high divorce rate, high female workforce participation, and high transient population were speculated to have contributed to the high level of wife abuse in the community (Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1987).

Smith (1986) surveyed 315 women living in Toronto in 1985 to determine the number who had been physically abused by a present or former husband, partner, boyfriend, or date. In this survey 10.8% of women admitted to abuse in the past year and slightly more than 18% said they had ever been abused.

In a later follow-up survey of married or cohabitating women in Toronto, Smith (1987) found the incidence of husband-to-wife violence to be significantly higher. Results of this second study showed that 14.4% of the women reported being physically abused in the past year, with 36.4% reporting ever having been abused by a husband, partner, boyfriend, or date. They suggest that the increase is more likely a result of methodological improvements than a real increase in the rate of wife abuse.

Whatever rates one derives, the limitations of the current methodologies and the highly sensitive nature of the topic, combine to suggest that any estimate of incidence of wife abuse is likely an underrepresentation of its actual occurrence. There is substantial evidence that, at the present time, the number of women who are abused by their intimate partners is alarmingly high.

Explanations for Wife Abuse

In recent years considerable research has been directed toward attempting to understand, and hence, alleviate the problem of wife assault. Studies have been undertaken within a variety of disciplines, each guided by distinct

theoretical perspectives. An exaustive review is beyond the scope of this summary, however, the main issues will be highlighted under the headings of Individual Explanations, Systemic Explanations, Social Learning, and Sociocultural Explanations.

Individual Explanations

A large body of research in the area of wife abuse has been aimed at examining the variables that influence a particular individual who abuses or is abused. Although these psychological explanations for wife abuse have been highly criticized for focusing on individual psychological characteristics and psychopathology while ignoring the social context, (Bograd, 1988) they remain influential in terms of theoretical and treatment development.

Characteristics of the battered woman. It was women who first opened the eyes of the helping profession and the community at large to the pervasive problem of wife abuse. The women's movement served as a collective voice, making public the plight of women who were victimized by their partners and demanding a social response to their needs. Appropriately, the first response was to provide a safe environment for battered women and women's shelters were formed. Subsequently, helping professionals began to address, elaborate, and study, the particular psychosocial issues of this group.

Personality/psychopathology. Psychoanalytic theory's early formulation of battered women as masochistic has been widely discredited (Rounsaville, 1978). Lenore Walker (1979) is credited with moving beyond this view to systematically study the psychology of the battered woman. Her book The Battered Woman, based on interviews with hundreds of battered women utilizes two main constructs to describe her psychological perspective. The first theoretical construct is that of learned helplessness,

derived from Seligman's (1968) theory and applied to battered women. The second construct, the cycle theory of violence, arises from the descriptions of the women she interviewed.

Walker's (1979) application of the learned helplessness theory postulates that:

> Repeated batterings, like electrical shocks, diminish the woman's motivation to respond. She becomes passive. Secondly, her cognitive ability to perceive success is changed. She does not believe her response will result in a favourable outcome, whether or not it might.... She cannot think of alternatives. Finally, her sense of emotional well-being becomes precarious. (p. 49-50)

Walker's theory proposes that these perceptions of helplessness keep women trapped in battering relationships, impervious to the serious violence and its potential lethality (Walker, 1979).

Although Walker's learned helplessness construct has received criticism, (Gondolf, 1988; Rosewater, 1988) it has influenced a significant strand of research aimed at examining the emotional and cognitive functioning of battered women.

Depression and low self esteem are seen as common correlates of wife abuse (Walker, 1984). Cascardi and O'Leary (1992) found that 52% of the women they assessed showed significant depressive symptomatology as well as low self-esteem. Maertz (1990) also found significantly low self-esteem in the sample of women he studied. In addition, he determined that these women used less effective coping strategies than their non-battered counterparts but, surprisingly, they demonstrated fewer irrational beliefs (as defined by Ellis, 1973). Maertz (1990) went on to develop a 70 item self-report instrument designed to specifically assess the self-defeating beliefs of battered women.

In terms of the psychiatric perspective, Rosewater

(1988) cites two common errors made by practitioners which serve to blame victims of wife abuse. First, she states that the extreme fearfulness (paranoia) and confusion created by repeatedly experiencing violence are commonly misdiagnosed as psychiatric symptoms. Secondly, women are often diagnosed as having a character disorder apart from or in conjunction with the above psychiatric problems and this is seen as a predisposition for the violence that occurs. This would seem to be the case in the study conducted by Gellman et al. (1984). Utilizing the MMPI they determined that battered women "manifest, to some extent, disordered personalities. Consequently, according to these researchers, they must be treated in conjunction with the abuser to bring about changes in the relationship" (p. 603). Rosewater (1988) sought to determine if an MMPI profile for battered women could be identified. The resultant group profile was similar to that of a chronic (female) schizophrenic and, according to the author, could place battered women at risk of being incorrectly given a psychiatric label. Rosewater's study also underscored that the MMPI profile of the battered women showed reactive traits, not character traits.

Skills deficits. Other researchers have adopted a stress and coping perspective to the study of battered women. Herbert et al. (1989) found that women who remain with abusive partners tend to employ cognitive strategies that help them perceive their relationship in a positive light. This study also showed that those women who remained with their abusive partners could not be differentiated from those who left their partners with respect to psychosocial adjustment. The level of psychosocial distress of the group was determined to be higher than the normal population but lower than a comparable clinical sample.

Launius and Jensen (1987) assessed interpersonal problem-solving skills of battered, counselling, and control

group women. They found battered women to be deficient in problem-solving skills in three main areas. Compared to both counselling and control groups they generated fewer total options, they generated fewer effective options, and they chose fewer effective options for use in the specific situation.

Profile vs. typology. As stated above, Walker (1979) was the first to describe battered women in terms of their unique clinical profile. More recently, there has been recognition of the similarity between the clinical profile of women who have been abused by their partners and that of other trauma survivors (Graham et al., 1988). Houskamp and Foy (1991), for example, found that 45% of the battered women they interviewed met the diagnostic criteria for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Walker (1991) also supports the high incidence of PTSD among battered women and emphasizes the clinical and legal implications of making an accurate diagnosis of PTSD.

Follingstad et al. (1991) presented a criticism of research that treats battered women as a homogeneous group and, thus, argue against attempting to identify a particular "profile" or "diagnostic category" to describe the phenomenon. Utilizing cluster analysis of structured interviews they identified a classification system for battered women including five clusters of characteristics. Although the argument against viewing all battered women the same is sound, the classification system they present lacks clarity and, thus, is of limited clinical and research value.

The ongoing research which focuses on the identification and description of the deficiencies and symptomatology of battered women is highly criticized for drawing attention away from the broader sociopolitical issues and for implicitly blaming the victim. In addition,

the empirical support for the view of battered women as possessing distinct characteristics is inconsistent. Again, with reference to Hotaling and Sugarman's (1986) analysis, it was found that "victims of male violence are no more likely than nonvictims to have symptoms of psychopathology, to be more hostile, or to abuse alcohol" (p. 118). They go on to state that, "This review of victim characteristics makes it clear that the most influential victim precipitant is being female" (p. 118).

This statement highlights one of the most confusing and contentious areas of discussion with regard to battered women. This discussion focuses on the question of whether the observed deficiencies and symptomatology characterize women who enter relationships in which they will be abused by their partners or if the pathology is a consequence of their repeated victimization. Although most would assert that it is the latter (Houskamp & Foy, 1991; Rosewater, 1988; Walker, 1991), others, at least implicitly, support the former (Launius et al., 1989).

Regardless of one's position regarding the "cause" or "consequence" argument, it can be asserted that any research that focuses solely on the characteristics of women who are battered implicitly lays the burden of responsibility at their feet. As Wardell et al. (1983) strongly assert, this type of research "with its assumption that battered women differ from 'officially unbattered women' is another kind of sexism that contains an a priori assumption of victim-blaming" (pp. 77-78).

The following anecdote poignantly illustrates the irresistible invitation to focus on the actions of women in attempting to explain and understand the problem of husband to wife violence and challenges this limiting view:

> A man left his home and walked down the block to the bus stop. He got into an argument with a stranger and proceeded to hit him several times. When told of the

> encounter we ask, "Why was he so violent?" The man then returned home and got into an argument with his wife. He hit her several times. We ask, "Why did she stay?" (Fagan and Wexler, 1987, p.5)

Studies that suggest ways in which the support and treatment of women who have been abused can be enhanced must be considered as a valuable contribution to the field, however, all clinical and research work in this area must be keenly scrutinized for potential sexism in philosophy and/or methodology.

Characteristics of the batterer. Over the past ten years, many researchers and clinicians have shifted their attention to focus on men who are violent toward their intimate partners. Treatment programs for batterers have been initiated and the current literature abounds with studies aimed at gaining an understanding of the psychosocial dynamics of men who abuse their partners (Dutton, 1988; Edleson, 1984; Gondolf, 1985; Hamberger & Hastings, 1991). Research that applies a psychological perspective to the examination of batterers is criticized in the same manner as that which is focused on the psychopathology of battered women. That is, it is argued that the study of the psychological characteristics and symptomatology of men who batter does little to address the broader sociopolitical issues of gender and power. Additionally, concern is expressed regarding the tendency to attribute causality to symptomatology rather than seeing the symptom (eg. depression) as a possible effect of abuse (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988).

Personality/Psychopathology. Despite these criticisms, research directed at distinguishing abusive men from non-abusive men and delineating the characteristics of those who use violence against their partners continues.

Hotaling and Sugarman's (1986) review of comparison studies found significant support for the view that men who

abuse their wives are distinguishable from their non-violent counterparts. Their study pointed to the multi-faceted nature of the problem and emphasized the need to consider the psychiatric perspective as well as stress theory, resource theory, and social learning theory.

Several studies support that, as a group, men who abuse their wives are more likely to show a pattern reflective of psychopathology than men who are not abusive (Fluornoy & Wilson, 1991; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986). Hamberger and Hastings have conducted several controlled studies to determine the existence of pathologic personality patterns in domestically violent men. They found that 86% of identified batterers showed elevation on at least one scale of the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (Hamberger & Hastings, 1986). Later comparison studies by these researchers offered further support to their original findings of a high level of personality pathology among batterers. These data also distinguished those with alcohol problems as having the highest levels of symptomatology (Hamberger & Hastings, 1991; Hastings & Hamberger, 1988). Coates et al. (1987) also found high levels of psychopathology among batterers. In their study of voluntary and court-ordered clients at intake they found that 80% of the voluntary clients and 71% of the court-ordered clients had clinical elevations on the MMPI.

Several empirical investigations have determined depression to be a major factor for men who batter (Hamberger & Hastings, 1986; Maiuro et al., 1986). It is not clear, however, whether the high depression scores reflect long-standing affective disorders or whether they indicate a situational response to the negative consequences of wife abuse such as legal charges or marital separation. The findings of Hamberger and Hastings (1988) would appear to support the latter contention, however. The results of

their study determined that batterers in treatment were more depressed than a nonviolent comparison group but nonidentified batterers in the community were not.

Alcoholism is also reported as a significant correlate of wife abuse. Inconsistency exists with respect to the determination of the relationship between alcohol and wife abuse due to the fact that some studies focus on whether or not the man was intoxicated at the time of the abusive episode whereas others measure the relationship between chronic alcoholism and wife abuse. Sonkin et al. (1985) determined that the majority of men who assaulted their partners while intoxicated also reported being violent when they were not under the influence. A review of studies by Tolman and Bennett (1990) indicates that chronic alcoholism is a better predictor of battering than acute intoxication and supports that alcohol abuse problems are significantly high among men who batter. In fact, Van Hasselt et al. (1985) estimate that half of all batterers presenting for treatment are likely in need of alcohol rehabilitation. These authors caution however, that there is no evidence to suggest that alcohol treatment, in itself, is effective in changing abusive behaviour.

Low self-esteem has also been found to be common among men who batter. Neidig et al. (1986) assessed the attitudinal characteristics of a group of military men who had assaulted their partners. Utilizing measures of self-esteem, attitudes towards others, attitudes towards women, authoritarianism, and dogmatism, they found that the only variable that distinguished the batterers from the control group was self-esteem. The relationship between low self-esteem and battering has been substantiated by some (Goldstein & Rosenbaum, 1985; Rosen, 1991) and not by others (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981) but is consistently present in clinical descriptions of men who batter (Walker, 1979,

Gondolf, 1985).

Skills deficits. Another line of research in this area involves an exploration of the relationship between social skills and wife abuse. Maiuro et al. (1986) found that men who abused their partners showed significantly less "initiating/request" assertiveness than a non-abusive comparison group. These researchers assert that, although able to demonstrate adequate verbal abilities for other tasks, these men have difficulty expressing their wants and needs.

Dutton and Strachan (1987) also found verbal skills to be a factor in their study of men who abuse their wives. They compared three groups; men who had assaulted their wives, men in a maritally conflicted (but nonassaultive) relationship, and men who reported marital satisfaction. The study included a measure of the need for power as assessed by responses to the Thematic Aperception Test. Results showed that although the batterers and maritally conflicted groups showed a similarly high need for power, the batterers lacked the verbal skills to hold their own in a conflict situation. These researchers speculated that the combination of a high need for power and a deficit in verbal ability produces chronic frustration, increasing the risk of a violent response to conflict.

In a similar vein Holtzworth-Monroe and Anglin (1991) found problem-solving deficiencies among men who abuse their partners. They found that violent men were unable to generate and choose competent behavioural responses in problematic marital situations. These findings directly support the inclusion of social skills training in batterer treatment programs.

Profile vs. typology. Attempts have been made to delineate a "batterer profile." Early characterizations were based on descriptions provided by abused women (Walker,

1979) or counsellors (Predergast, 1983). More recent formulations have been derived from interview, assessment, and survey data, however (Hastings & Hamberger, 1988; Roberts, 1987). Roberts (1987) for example, described a "typical profile" of an abusive husband based on a sample of 234 men who had charges against them: 1. He is young, between the ages of 20 and 34. 2. Frequently he and his partner are cohabitating rather than married. 3. He is either unemployed or working in a blue collar job. 4. He is likely to be an excessive drinker or drug abuser who has been convicted of public order disturbances or illegal possession of drugs (p. 91). Apart from the obvious sampling limitations in this study, such a profile offers little to assist the clinician in diagnosis or intervention. In fact, any attempt to describe batterers in terms of a unitary profile, with the underlying assumption of homogeneity, can be criticized in light of the present state of knowledge regarding this group. Recent empirical investigations have suggested that there is no distinct profile and have offered, instead, a description of typologies describing clusters of characteristics shown by men who batter.

From their study of the psychological profiles of batterers Hamberger and Hastings (1988) found that, although no distinct profile exists, the psychopathology identified in their sample appears to cluster into three subtypes of personality pathology including a schizoidal/borderline type, a narcissistic/antisocial type, and a passive dependent/compulsive type. Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) also determined that batterers tend to present a psychiatric picture similar to males with antisocial or borderline personality disorders.

Gondolf's (1988b) behavioural typology of batterers also delineates three clusters of characteristics among

batterers. Type 1 is referred to as the Sociopathic Batterer and describes a man who is extremely abusive of his wife and children. The abuse may include a weapon. His antisocial behaviour distinguishes him from the other types and has likely resulted in previous arrests for property, violent, or drug- or alcohol-related crimes. Type 2, the Antisocial Batterer is also extremely verbally and physically abusive. While he is likely to have been generally violent, he is less likely to have been arrested than the sociopathic batterer. Type 3 is called the Typical Batter and describes a man who has committed less severe verbal and physical abuse than the other two types. This man, according to Gondolf, is more likely to conform to the prevailing clinical profiles of batterers (p. 199). The development of a typology has important clinical implications and suggests that differential treatment of the different types of batterers is warranted. Those with the antisocial and sociopathic features described by types 1 and 2 are less likely to respond to counselling and group treatment.

Hershorn and Rosenbaum (1991) offer another alternative for classification of abusers. They distinguish two types of men who abuse. The first type, described as Overcontrolled Hostile, show more severe but less frequent violent episodes. The sole target abuse is their partner. The second classification refers to Undercontrolled Hostile men who are more generally aggressive and more frequently aggressive. These men are more likely to have witnessed violence in their family of origin.

Clearly, the value of any classification system lies in its ability to enhance clinical assessment and intervention. Further examination of the three alternatives described above is necessary to determine their utility for clinicians and researchers.

In summary, although research investigating the psychosocial characteristics of batterers continues to be heavily criticized for deflecting attention away from broader social issues (Bograd, 1988; Pagelow, 1992) there are many who strongly defend its validity and utility. They call for an exploration of individual characteristics, not independent of, but as a supplement to exploration of social factors (Hastings & Hamberger, 1988; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). As Tolman and Bennett (1990) assert, in order to be informative, research in this area should be "linked to other levels of analysis and explicate rather than obscure the connections between individual behaviour and the important social variables, specifically the patriarchal social context, unequal power distribution, and culturally supported patterns of gender relations" (p. 87).

Systemic Explanations

Systemic explanations for wife abuse arise from the view that both partners play a role in the abusive dynamics. Walker's (1979) delineation of the "cycle of violence" provides a transactional description of wife abuse consisting of three phases; tension building, the acute battering incident, and loving contrition or reconciliation. In the first phase the tension builds as the husband expresses dissatisfaction and hostility and the woman attempts to placate him. Continued escalation is inevitable without intervention, and the acute battering incident occurs. According to Walker, women sometimes precipitate the explosion in order to have some control over where and when it occurs. The abusive episode results in a discharge in tension and, thus, is reinforcing. Phase three is characterized by contrition and apologies from the batterer. The behaviours of this phase are seen to reinforce the woman for staying in the relationship (Walker, 1979, p. 55-70). Walker describes couples living in a wife-battering

relationship as "a symbiotic pair" (p. 68).

Hoffman (1981) describes the dynamics of wife abuse in more systemic terms, describing the relational structure of the overadequate woman/underadequate man. This conceptualization views the husband's use of violence as a means of moving out of his one-down position to regain the mutually-valued equilibrium in the relationship.

Weitzman and Dreen (1982) describe couples where there is wife abuse as locked into a complementary system in which one partner is superior and primary and the other is inferior and secondary. Violence is avoided as long as the system is unchallenged but the homeostasis is threatened by any move toward symmetry. They cite six major control themes around which violent episodes may erupt: 1. distance and intimacy; 2. jealousy and loyalty; 3. dependence and independence; 4. rejection and unconditional acceptance; 5. adequacy and inadequacy; 6. control, power, and powerlessness. In this view, violence erupts from the struggle for control over the functional rules of the relationship.

The systemic view of wife battering is highly criticized for its implication of mutuality and, hence, attribution of responsibility to the victim. The systemic description of wife abuse as "essentially a transactional phenomenon" (Neidig, 1984) has been criticized for minimizing the central role of violence while focusing on problematic relationship dynamics (Edleson, 1984). The potential danger of this perspective is emphasized in Edleson's (1984) assertion that, "Violence is the issue. Not relationships" (p. 484). Cook and Frantz-Cook (1984) speak to the ongoing controversy, acknowledging that family therapists have been accused by feminists of "being part of the problem, rather than part of the solution" with respect to the identification and treatment of wife abuse (p. 83).

Nonetheless, they and others defend the appropriateness of examining systemic dynamics in understanding and treating the problem of wife abuse.

In her critique of systemic approaches to wife battering Bograd (1984) summarizes the main assumptions of the systemic formulations. First, that wife battering is the product of an interactional context characterized by repetitive sequences of transactional behaviour. Secondly, that battering occurs within relationships marked by certain relationship structures. Thirdly, because of circular causality, the violence is seen to serve a functional role in maintaining the marital system (p. 560). Bograd (1984) and others (Goldner et al., 1990; Pressman, 1989) caution that, although systemic formulations help explain the redundancy of relationship patterns, their lack of attention to issues of power and gender inequality make them dangerously biased against women.

It is argued, however, that feminist and family therapy perspectives do not have to be mutually exclusive (Cook & Frantz-Cook, 1984; Goldner et al., 1990). Researchers such as Goldner (1990) advocate a layering of perspectives, simultaneously considering issues related to gender and power, and men and women, within the frameworks of both feminism and family therapy. This inclusive both/and stance significantly elevates the level of conceptualization, and, hence, treatment, beyond the search for the "accurate" unidimensional explanation, and represents a great step toward understanding the complex problem of wife abuse.

Violence in the Family of Origin: Social Learning

There has been a relatively consistent finding that men who abuse their wives and women who are victims of wife abuse are more likely than comparison groups to have witnessed or experienced violence in the families they grew up in (Barnett et al., 1991; Lewis, 1987; Roy, 1977).

Dutton (1988) has attempted to examine the applicability of Bandura's social learning theory to men who are violent against their partners. Bandura's theory (1979) describes the process of acquiring and maintaining aggressive habits through observation and reinforcement. From this perspective, violence would be considered the product of a successful learning experience, with violent family members serving as models, and aggression being followed by reinforcement. It was found that, when presented with video-taped scenarios of husband-wife conflicts, men with a history of wife assault reported higher levels of anger than non-assaultive men (Dutton & Browning, 1983). In a subsequent study using the same technique Dutton (1988) determined that wife assaulters also showed higher anger scores than men who were generally assaultive. He interprets these findings as suggesting that these men experience anger in situations which threaten their sense of control. The anger serves a defensive function which allows them to act in a sex-role consonant fashion to restore control of the situation, which in turn, acts as a reinforcer (Dutton, 1988).

With the exception of Dutton's work, examination of the social learning question in the area of wife abuse has consisted of studies determining whether or not batterers and their victims grew up in a violent environment. Roy (1977) found that 80% of men who abuse their wives and 30% of women who are abused in their marriage witnessed or received abuse as a child. Hastings and Hamberger's (1988) findings also indicated that batterers were more likely to have come from violent homes, and that this variable was more significant among those with alcohol problems (1988). The survey data of Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) showed that men reared in homes where they both witnessed marital violence and experienced abuse had a rate of abuse

600 times greater than men from nonviolent homes. These results lead to Straus' unequivocal statement that, "Each generation learns to be violent by being a participant in a violent family" (p. 121).

Lewis (1987) found that 34.1% of the abused women in her sample reported being a victim of child abuse compared to 7.3% of the comparison group. The rates of child abuse among men was even higher (46.8%) compared to 10.9% in the comparison group. Caesar (1988) expanded her analysis to include examination of the impact of witnessing marital violence. She found that batterers were more likely to have been abused as children, to have witnessed their father beating their mother, and to have been disciplined as a child with corporal punishment than men in a comparison group. Twenty-seven per cent of her sample of batterers had both been abused and witnessed abuse as a child. Of note in this study, was her finding that 38% of the batterers reported neither witnessing nor experiencing abuse in their family of origin. These men were as likely as the exposed group to have been severely abusive to their wives. They were distinguishable, however, in regard to their experience of corporal punishment as children. These results provide an interesting challenge to those who view violence in the family of origin as a necessary and sufficient condition for wife abuse.

Further arguments against this unidimensional explanation of wife abuse are put forth by Kaufman and Zigler (1986) whose analysis of studies estimate the rate of intergenerational transmission of violence at between 25 and 35% and Volpe (1987) who found no evidence of a "cycle of violence" in his longitudinal study. As Pagelow (1992) asserts:

> There is sufficient reason to question the blanket assumption of a "cycle of violence" and to consider a family history of violence as only one factor out of

> many that may be associated with a greater probability of adult violence. (p. 111)

Sociocultural Explanations

Sociocultural explanations move away from examination of the individual and link the problem to social norms and cultural values. It is suggested that the organization of contemporary western society leaves family life conflict-ridden and violence-prone (Straus, 1980). In addition, subculture of violence theories postulate that certain subcultures in society, usually economically disadvantaged groups, tolerate a higher level of violence than other groups (McCall & Shields, 1986).

Power and control theories. Several theorists have examined the specific elements of power and control in relationships where there is aggression. Gelles (1983) theoretical propositions rest on the principles that people will exercise violence in the family if the cost of being violent does not exceed the reward and if there are insufficient social controls to restrain such behavior. Others have examined the role of access to interpersonal resources in violence between spouses (Bersani & Chen, 1988; Foa & Foa, 1980; Teichman & Teichman, 1989).

Environmental stress. Wife abuse has also been explained within the framework of stress theory. Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) found that the likelihood of spouse abuse increased as the level of stress in the family increased. They assessed such stressors as financial pressures, work problems, pregnancy, problems with children, and sexual problems. Barnett et al. (1990) also found that for men who abuse their partners life stressors serve as stimulus variables with hostility, proviolence attitudes, and negative stress reactions, serving as learned intervening variables.

Barling and Rosenbaum (1986) focused on occupational

stress in their comparison of maritally satisfied men, dissatisfied abusive men, and dissatisfied nonabusive men. They found a significant relationship between wife abuse and men's experience of work-related stress.

Farington (1986) also considers stress to be a major factor contributing to violence in families. His conceptualization views the present-day family as particularly vulnerable to the debilitating effects of stress and predicts further escalation of the problem of intra-family violence.

Although wife abuse is recognized to cross all race, class, and socioeconomic status lines, there is considerable evidence that the incidence of abuse is higher among those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Berk, 1984; Deschner, 1984; Roberts, 1987) or socially isolated (Gelles & Cornell, 1990). The results are not conclusive, however, with Hotaling and Sugarman's (1986) analysis pointing to an inconsistent association between key stress variables such as unemployment and number of children and wife abuse.

Although the sociocultural perspective clearly broadens the picture and moves away from a focus on individual pathology, the tendency among many researchers is to take a gender-neutral stance that views violence as a problem of both sexes (McNeely & Mann, 1990; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). This has been criticized by feminists who argue that, in many cases, sociological investigations replicate on a social level the same errors that psychologists make at the level of the individual. The main error as the feminists illustrate is that:

> Violence is abstracted from a sociohistorical analysis and attributed to deviant structures that cannot adequately account for the empirical reality that it is women as wives who disproportionately are the targets of physical abuse and coercion. (Bograd, 1988, p.19)

Feminists assert that examination of the patriarchal

structure of society is central to understanding the development and maintenance of abuse of women by their partners.

Patriarchy and relationships. There is unanimous agreement that the problem of wife abuse is not a new problem. Stories of husbands beating wives go back hundreds of years and, as Dobash and Dobash (1979) document, prior to the nineteenth century, it was considered essential for husbands to chastise their wives through the use of physical force. Although in most western societies the laws no longer officially sanction physical abuse of women, the situation remains one in which men generally hold greater access to power and resources in the community and women are at significant risk of becoming victims of male violence (MacLeod, 1980,1987; Smith, 1987). It is asserted that it is patriarchy which provides the structural and ideological underpinnings of this systematized injustice. Smith (1990) outlines the two components of patriarchy as:

> A structure in which men have more power and privilege than women, and an ideology that legitimizes this arrangement. (p.257)

Feminists argue that in order to understand the problem of violence against women by their intimate partners the focus must shift from viewing the abuse as "random" and "irrational" acts to a recognition that the violence arises out of a social context that supports the subordination of women (Bograd, 1988).

Dobash and Dobash (1979) were the first to systematically explore the relationship between wife battering and the patriarchal underpinnings of the context in which it occurs. Their in-depth interviews of 109 women in shelters determined the primary source of the violence to be the husband's feelings about his wife's inability to live up to his "expectations" and "ideals" of "a good wife." Issues related to jealousy, her domestic duties, and who

should control the money were frequently cited as the triggers for violent episodes.

Quantitative studies have also addressed the relationship between patriarchal structure and wife abuse. Yllo (1983) utilized data from Straus et al.'s (1980) first national survey of family violence to determine the relationship between women's status and the rate of wife abuse. The expected linear relationship was not supported. Rather, a curvilinear relationship was shown in which wife abuse was highest in states where women's status relative to men's was lowest, declined as women's status improved, but increased again in those states where women's status was highest relative to men's. She speculated that the results might be evidence of a "violent backlash" by husbands frustrated with the breakdown of traditional sex roles.

Yllo (1984) went on to examine the relationships among structural inequality, patriarchal norms, and wife beating. She found a strong positive correlation between patriarchal norms and wife beating. That is, the level of wife beating was highest in contexts where women's status was highest and there remained strong support for patriarchal norms favouring the subordination of women in the marital relationship.

Two other studies based on analysis of survey data (Coleman & Straus, 1986; Straus & Gelles, 1986) supported earlier findings of a positive correlation between structural inequality between marital partners and wife abuse. These data also indicated that both variables, wife abuse and structural inequality, differed significantly from state to state.

Smith (1990) sought to move from this normative type of examination to determine the relationship between patriarchal ideology and wife abuse at the individual level. Utilizing data from a survey of 604 Toronto women he

concluded that:

> Husbands, who in the eyes of their wives or female partners, espoused a set of beliefs and attitudes supportive of patriarchy in the domestic context were more likely than husbands who did not espouse such beliefs and attitudes to have assaulted their wives at some point in the relationship. (p. 268)

The support for this thesis is not universal, however. In their examination of 52 case-comparison studies, Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) did not find a consistent association between a husband's traditional sex role expectations and his use of violence with a marital partner. They explained this by suggesting that the violent men and the comparison groups in the studies may share similar beliefs with respect to patriarchal norms and desire for power and control, thereby creating a situation in which sex role inequality functions more like a constant than a variable. Smith (1990) argues that the findings showing definite differences in levels of sex role inequality across American states suggest otherwise (Straus et al., 1986).

Studies which have focused on one aspect of inequality in the relationship such as occupational status have also shown inconsistent results. Hornung et al. (1981) reported a positive relationship between wife abuse and a wife's higher occupational status relative to her husband while Hauser (1981) found no relationship between these two variables.

The debate continues regarding the relationship between men's use of violence against their partners and rigid adherence to patriarchal norms. Additionally, results are inconsistent regarding the impact of changes of women's status. Clearly, the issue is a complex sociopolitical one that calls for ongoing multi-perspective analysis.

Sex role socialization. Inherent in the patriarchal norms of our culture is the differential process of socialization for males and females. Gondolf (1985)

suggests that men and women are socialized into conflicting roles and that masculine socialization results in a man responding to conflict in the way he knows best, that is, violence (p. 45). Goldner et al. (1990) voice a similar perspective regarding male/female socialization in their assertion that "relationships in which women are abused are not unique but, rather exemplify in extremis the stereotypical gender arrangements that structure intimacy between men and women generally" (p. 344).

Gilligan's (1982) comprehensive qualitative study of women describes the impact of female socialization on the development of identity. Her influential work draws attention to the minor role played by women in the development of social science theory and challenges the pattern of using male experience to define human experience. She underscores the importance of "giving voice" to women's ways of knowing. Her study of women's moral decision-making reveals a tendency for women to interpret moral dilemmas based on relationship and care in contrast to men's focus on achievement and fairness (p. 183). Her research into women's identity development further supports gendered differences, indicating that "many more women than men define themselves in terms of their relationships and connections to others..." (p. 8). The traditional masculine role, on the other hand, is characterized by isolation, and a utilization of defenses to shield the self from encounters that could expose insecurities (Gondolf, 1985). Gondolf (1985) observes that men who batter tend to be oversocialized into the traditional male role predicated on the maintenance of rigid control.

Pleck (1981) speaks further to the powerful socialization of the male sex role identity:

> Exaggerated masculinity, rather than being a reaction to inner insecurities, may reflect an overlearning of the externally prescribed role or an over conformity

> to it. The alternative interpretation, part of the emerging new theory of sex-role strain, puts the burden of responsibility for destructive, extreme male behaviour on society's unrealistic male-role expectations -- where it belongs -- and not on the failings of individual men and their mothers. (p. 77)

Goldner (1988) also emphasizes the importance of recognizing the critical influence of sex role socialization and maintains that gender should be viewed as "a central organizing principle of knowledge and culture" (p. 18). She further asserts that the perpetuation of patriarchy and its injustices supports the perpetuation of relationships where love is "tainted" by domination, and subordination is "eroticized to make it tolerable" (p. 30). Unlike Pleck, however, she suggests that this viewpoint does not exclude an examination of psychological and interactional variables that influence the problem of wife abuse. She and her colleagues purport the adoption of a both-and position and explain that "To say that violence, domination, subordination, and victimization are psychological, does not mean that they are not <u>also</u> material, moral, and legal. In other words, to develop a psychological explanation of violence is not to explain it away" (1990, p.345).

In summary, the individual, systemic, and social explanations of wife abuse presented above are not offered as mutually exclusive "realities" but, rather as a representation of the broad, multi-variable complexity of the problem of wife abuse. The ecologically nested perspective of Dutton (1985) which considers the interaction of individual, family, community, and cultural factors influencing the development and maintenance of wife abuse is a valuable contribution in this regard.

<u>Intervention</u>

The community and professional response to the problem of wife abuse has taken several forms including police intervention and arrest, shelters and group programs for

women, programs for men who abuse, and conjoint therapy.

The Police and Criminal Justice System

The reluctance of police and the criminal justice system to become involved in "domestic disputes" was strongly challenged by victims' rights advocates in the 1980's who pressured the court system to treat violence between intimates in the same manner that they would treat violence between strangers. In November, 1982 the Canadian government affirmed the criminality of wife abuse with the Soliciter General's policy directive that police lay charges in all domestic violence cases where "facts and circumstances warrant this action" (MacLeod, 1989). This represented a significant change from the traditional policies that called for minimal intervention in "family disputes" that left women and children at extreme risk (Wolfe et al., 1985)

Sherman and Berk (1984) were the first to systematically assess the effects of police intervention in cases of wife assault in the United States. Police were randomly assigned to respond to an assault call in one of three ways: an arrest; advice -- including, in some cases, informal mediation; and an order to the suspect to leave for eight hours. The cases were then followed for six months. Results showed that the arrested suspects manifested significantly less subsequent violence than the other two groups. Berk and Newton's (1985) replication study showed similar results. That is, arrests substantially reduced the number of new incidents of wife battery. These findings added support to those advocating for change in the criminal justice system.

In a Canadian study, Burris and Jaffe (1983) found that police laying charges resulted in a significant decrease in charges being withdrawn or dismissed. These results countered the prevailing belief that victims would be less

cooperative if police laid the charges. In a subsequent study Jaffe et al. (1986) sought to determine the long-term consequences of a policy directing police officers to lay criminal charges in cases of wife abuse. They found that, in addition to a dramatic increase in police-laid charges, the reported satisfaction of victims increased significantly, and recidivism decreased. Victims did not decrease their requests for service, as had been feared. Interestingly, despite these positive results, the attitude of police remained ambivalent about the effectiveness of their actions.

In the United States, advocates for battered women have attempted to effect changes in the way that police and the courts respond to wife abuse by establishing Community Intervention Projects. Initial evaluations of these coordinated community interventions indicate positive results (Gamache et al., 1988; Dutton, 1986; Tolman & Bhosley, 1989). Syers and Edleson (1992), for example, found that the combination of police arrest on first visit and court-mandated treatment was most effective in reducing repeat offenses of wife assault.

The role of the criminal justice system in responding to wife abuse is important and an integrated system appears effective in reducing recidivism among men who batter.

Assistance for Women

Services for women who have been abused by their partner have been predicated on the belief that they need shelter, safety, and psychological support when escaping an abusive situation. The first shelters for battered women were opened in British Columbia and Alberta in 1972 and shelter workers have continued to take a leadership role in expanding public awareness and improving services for battered women and their children (MacLeod, 1989). Between 1979 and 1989 the number of shelters in Canada quadrupled to

308, clear evidence of an increased recognition of the problem of wife abuse. Funding remains an ongoing problem for shelters, however, and the current climate of economic restraint is cause for concern among shelter workers (MacLeod, 1989).

Walker (1984) emphasizes that not all women who have been abused require therapy to recover. For many, living in a violence-free environment, and experiencing success in work and family relationships is sufficient to maintain a positive, healing direction in their lives. For others, participation in a group provides a valuable network of support and validation.

Many women who are or have been battered do enter into treatment, however, and although there is a dearth of research comparing alternative counselling approaches, there is compelling support for viewing and treating the problem from a feminist perspective (Pence & Shepard, 1988; Pressman, 1984; Walker, 1984). This orientation holds women as experts on their own experience and, thus, avoids the perpetuation of a hierarchical and patriarchal relationship structure that involves the professional expert giving advice and direction to the client. Pressman (1984) describes five values she feels are essential for counsellors to hold in order to work successfully with women who have been abused:

> 1. No behaviour of any woman justifies or provokes violence. No woman ever deserves to be hit, pushed, shoved, kicked or physically hurt in any way.
> 2. Women are not masochistic and in no way do they derive any pleasure from being physically hurt or threatened.
> 3. A major contributing factor to women remaining in battering relationships is the endorsement and teaching by our social institutions that women belong in the home, are less competent than men to succeed in the work force, should defer to the dominance of their husbands, and should be the primary emotional support of the family.

> 4. In counselling, the problems of the marital relationship cannot be the initial focus. Until all family members are safe, it is too dangerous to discuss problems of the family or the relationship other than the violence.
> 5. Anyone working with battered women must provide role models of competent, successful, assertive women. (p. 44)

The value of group therapy in assisting women who have been abused is widely recognized. A support group provides a safe environment in which women can break free of the isolation and secrecy that dominated their experience of abuse. In addition, a group format allows different levels of participation including, observing, listening, sharing, and offering help to others (Campbell, 1986; Hartman, 1983).

One study has been identified which sought to determine women's satisfaction with the counselling services they received. In their survey of 1000 battered women, Bowker and Maurer (1986) found that women were most satisfied with feminist self-help groups. Social service counselling agencies were rated as second most effective, following by clergy. These researchers recommend increased funding to women's groups rather than traditional counselling agencies.

One area of ongoing discussion is that surrounding women's decision to leave or remain with an abusive partner. Although early conceptualizations took place within Walker's framework of learned helplessness, later work addressed broader issues.

Hilton's (1992) qualitative study determined that, although many variables influenced the women's decision to leave, the majority of them left the relationship because of the risks to their children. Life-threatening attacks were also cited as an important determinant in the decision-making process.

Gondolf (1988a) examined the factors associated with women' decision to return to their partner on discharge from

a women's shelter. In his sample of 6612 women who had accessed women's shelters in Texas during an 18 month period in 1984-85, 24% planned to return to their partners with an additional 7% stating they were uncertain. This figure is less than other estimates (Aguirre, 1985). Of particular note in this study, however, is the finding that the major factor influencing whether or not a woman would return to the relationship was whether or not her partner was in counselling. Factors associated with economic independence (transportation, child care, own income) were also rated as influential. Background variables such as race, class, and amount of abuse experienced, were not predictive of shelter outcome. As Gondolf points out, these results have significant theoretical and programmatic implications. It would appear that women hold high hopes for their partners ability to change as a result of counselling. High drop-out rates in batterer treatment programs and the potential for treatment to be used as a form of manipulation rather than a means of change suggest a much more cautious stance, however. Gondolf recommends that, in light of the influence of batterers' treatment programs on women's decisions, shelters should be active in their supervision and monitoring processes (Gondolf, 1988, p. 286).

Treatment for Men

In the last decade there has been a proliferation of intervention programs for men who abuse their partners. As Sonkin (1988) notes, "These programs have grown out of the realization that stopping violent behaviour rests with the offender, not the victim" (p. 66). Although recent efforts have been made to evaluate the effectiveness of various programs (Dutton, 1986; Edleson & Grusznski, 1988; Sonkin, 1986b), few outcome studies have compared the different treatment approaches. Edleson and Syers (1991) did undertake this task and found that, at six months post-

treatment, those men in structured, short-term group treatment were less violent and threatening toward their partners than those men who had been in self-help groups. At eighteen month follow-up, however, this was no longer the case, with the self-help group reporting substantially higher rates of nonviolence than the other two groups. Threatening behaviours remained higher for this group than for the other two, however, leading to the researchers to suggest that the benefits of structered treatment programs are more consistent over time than the self-help format.

Several controversial issues remain unresolved with respect to batterer treatment. Sonkin has highlighted three main areas of contention. Firstly, there is disagreement regarding the content of the programs and whether to adopt a perspective focusing on anger management, stress and coping, childhood abuse, or sex-role socialization. Secondly, debate exists regarding the best therapeutic process, ie. educational vs. therapeutic vs. consciousness-raising as well as modality (individual, couple, or group). Finally, there is controversy regarding the extent to which the victim shares in the process of stopping violent behaviour and is used as a resource for determining if this behaviour recurs (Sonkin, 1988, p. 69). Despite these disagreements, however, the overwhelming direction for treatment of batterers has been towards structured or semi-structured group therapy. In addition, there is some consistency in format, with most programs incorporating anger control, communication skills, and sex-role resocialization (Edleson, 1984; Saunders, 1984; Purdy & Nickle, 1981).

The main distinction between these group programs appears to be in philosophy and, hence, treatment emphasis. Those who view battering as the result of individual deficiencies in coping and social skills (eg. Caeser & Hamberger, 1989) emphasize skill development in their

treatment. On the other hand, critics of these programs, stress the importance of maintaining a treatment focus on the broader social issue of men's domination and control of women (Adams, 1988; Gondolf, 1985). They advocate the development of profeminist programs which "enable men to take responsibility for their own behaviour and at the same time critically examine the social context in which it occurs" (Adams, 1988, p. 4). These programs are distinct from other psycho-educational or cognitive-behavioural approaches in their analysis of battering within the context of sexism. That is, battering is seen, not as a skills deficit or stress management problem but, rather, as an abuse of power (Adams, 1988; Gondolf, 1985). The goals of profeminist educational programs extend beyond improving the abusive man's psychological well-being and strengthening his communication skills to include the elimination of all behaviours which undermine the woman's rights as an individual and as a partner (Adams, 1988).

As stated above, to this point, with the exception of Edleson and Syer's (1991) evaluation of the differential effectiveness of various treatment modalities, most researchers have limited their investigations to determining attrition rates and assessing the outcome of treatment in terms of reducing subsequent acts of abuse.

Regardless of the type of program, the main problem associated with batterer treatment is attrition (Pirog-Good & Stats-Kealey, 1985; Roberts, 1984). Feazell et al.'s (1984) survey indicated that one third to one half of the batterers dropped out after the first session. Burns et al.'s (1991) review of studies also supports an attrition rate of approximately 50%. Roberts (1984) reported a 75% drop-out rate after one or two sessions in a Denver treatment program. More recently, Gondolf (1991) analyzed the records of 200 men who made inquiries to a batterer

treatment program. His results showed that the attrition from inquiry to intake was 73%, from inquiry to counselling attendance was 86%, and from inquiry to 12 counselling sessions was 93%. Less than 1% actually completed the contracted eight months of counselling sessions. The only background and protocol variable significantly associated with attrition was marital status.

In terms of recidivism, data from a large domestic abuse program evaluation showed that two thirds of the men who completed the treatment program were non-violent at follow-up approximately six months later. Just over half of those who received some treatment but did not complete the program were also reported to be non-violent at follow-up (Edleson & Gruszinski, 1989).

Dutton's (1986) quasi-experimental study found that 84% of men who completed treatment reported no violence one year later. Verbal violence was also significantly reduced. Results showed a significant difference between treatment and no-treatment groups. Hamberger and Hastings (1986a) found almost complete elimination of physical violence among men who completed a 15 week program as reported at one year follow-up.

Hamberger and Hastings (1989) went on to compare men who completed a batterer treatment program with men who dropped out. They found that dropouts were younger, had lower employment rates, and showed higher pretreatment levels of police contact for alcohol and drug-related offenses than men who completed the program. In addition, completers showed lower levels of overall psychopathology than dropouts.

In a later study, these researchers compared the demographic and personality characteristics of men who completed a batterer treatment program and remained nonviolent with men who completed the program but reported

violence. Compared to violence-free completers, recidivists reported higher levels of substance abuse both before and after treatment. They also showed higher levels of narcissism on the MCMI personality inventory (Hamberger & Hastings, 1990). The relationship between recidivism and substance abuse supports the findings of Demaris and Jackson (1987). The recidivism rate for their sample was 35%.

In summary, accurate evaluation of treatment success remains difficult, hampered by methodological problems associated with no controls, no comparison of various treatment modalities, limited measures of success, and short-term follow-up. Findings that suggest that emotional and verbal abuse continue during counselling are particularly disconcerting (Edleson, 1986; Gondolf, 1987c) Clearly, there is a need to address the methodological problems in order to determine what programs do work best in decreasing men's use of violence against their wives.

In addition, consideration should be given to the process of change among those men who successfully "reform". Beginning efforts in this regard suggest a developmental process of change that extends beyond what is typically considered "treatment" (Adams, 1989; Gondolf & Hanneken, 1987; Jennings, 1990). These findings make sense in light of the extensive demands for change faced by men who enter treatment. Further delineation of the process of change is warranted and will provide direction to clinicians as well as theoreticians.

Conjoint Counselling

As stated earlier, traditional systemic formulations of wife abuse and conjoint treatment of abusive men and their partners have been heavily criticized for viewing the problem of violence as a relationship problem and, thus, implicitly suggesting equal responsibility for its cause, maintenance, and alleviation. Terms such as "conjugal

violence" and "domestic abuse" overlook the deep-seated patriarchal structures and ideologies in the society which award men greater power and control than women. Nonetheless, conjoint treatment of the problem of wife abuse remains a common treatment modality (Cook & Frantz-Cook, 1984; Geffner et al., 1989; Deschner, 1984; Margolin, 1979; Neidig & Friedman, 1984).

Bograd (1984) outlines four possible drawbacks to conjoint therapy with battered women and abusive men. Firstly, the development of a therapeutic alliance with both partners is not possible if the man is not committed to addressing his violence or if the woman risks retaliation from her husband for anything she might say in therapy. Secondly, the violence must always be held as the primary treatment issue and this runs counter to systemic formulations of circular causality. Thirdly, a family therapy approach runs the risk of perpetuating traditional sex roles by following the systemic axiom that suggests intervening with the most responsive family member. In therapy with abusive men and their partners, this is almost always the woman. Fourthly, the goal of preserving the marriage is clearly a dangerous one when applied to couples where the wife continues to be abused (Bograd, 1984, p. 566).

Dutton (1988) agrees that men should be held responsible for their violence but suggests that consideration of the systemic environment is also important. He states that:

> Treating the male is only a first step in ameliorating an abusive situation. In couples where the conflict environment remains high or where the woman is verbally or physically abusive, the risk of the male returning to violent forms of conflict resolution are also relatively high. (p. 20)

It is clear that Dutton favours group treatment for the abusive husband prior to the initiation of conjoint therapy.

It is widely supported that battering groups for abusive men and support groups for women who have been abused reflect the most appropriate treatment strategy (Bograd, 1984; Gondolf, 1987; Pressman, 1989; Walker, 1984).

In response to the feminist critique which underscores the possible risks inherent in strict adherence to systemic theory and technique, efforts have been made to adopt a both-and stance with respect to the two perspectives. Feminist family therapists, thus, consider broad sociopolitical issues in addition to examination of patterns of interpersonal transaction. Placing the qualifier "feminist" on family therapy implies a distinct departure from traditional systemic ideas. In working with couples where the wife has been abused, feminist values demand that physical safety not be compromised, that men be held responsible for their actions, and that a distinction be made between the verbal expression of anger and the utilization of abusive behaviour. Thinking systemically does not preclude the position that the husband is solely accountable for the battering incident (Bograd, 1984; Cook & Frantz-Cook, 1984; Goldner et al., 1990). Violence and power are not seen as simply functions of individual marital systems but also as derived from the changing notions of appropriate gender-related behaviour (Hare-Mustin, 1978). From a feminist perspective, a systemic formulation is biased if it can be employed to implicate the battered woman or to excuse the abusive man.

The discussion in the literature with respect to the treatment of wife battering appears to be shifting from a polarized debate about one modality such as conjoint therapy versus another such as individual or group to a more comprehensive, multi-dimensional view that allows for the simultaneous examination of the problem from a variety of perspectives. This loosening of rigid theoretical

boundaries will, hopefully, serve to enhance the ability of clinicians to provide appropriate treatment for the complex problem of wife abuse.

Summary

The literature in the field of family violence, specifically that which addresses the problem of husband to wife abuse, continues to present a myriad of unresolved issues, and continues to generate as many questions as it answers. This lack of certainty can be viewed in a positive light, however, indication of an openness in the field to ongoing investigations from a variety of perspectives. Indeed, the current research does cross disciplinary lines and reflects efforts in sociology, psychology, social work, criminology, the health care system, the criminal justice system, as well as grassroots community groups. The hope is that this diverse attention will move the field closer to a comprehensive and integrated understanding, rather than create further divisions and polarities.

At the present time there is, as Yllo (1988) points out, "a division in the field between those who bring feminist perspectives to bear on the problem of wife abuse and those who do not" (p.28). Those "who do not," unfortunately view the problem of wife abuse as reflective of a particular psychological problem in one or the other partner, or view violence as a general social problem, a "human" problem. Although psychological, sociological, and systems theories are valid and important, when applied in their pure forms to the study of men's use of violence against their wives, they risk falling short -- dangerously short. Psychological explanations can be used to excuse abusers, the sociological perspective can be used to show that women are equally as violent as men, and systems theory can imply that the problem of violence is a mutual one and just one of many in a troubled relationship. Treatment

programs based on these "pure" explanations promote solutions that could perpetuate the problem and place women at risk of further victimization.

The analyses, and hence the treatment, of the problem of violence against wives must include many levels of examination, and must be conducted with an understanding of the patriarchal culture in which violence against women takes place, a culture with an unequal distribution of power, and a socially structured pattern of relationships between men and women. The both-and conceptualizations of Goldner and her colleagues (1990), and the ongoing profeminist program developments of Gondolf (1988) and Adams (1989) stand as encouraging examples that reflect an integrated, comprehensive approach to the advancement of theory and treatment.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The Grounded Theory Method

Rationale for Selection of Grounded Theory Methodology

The research question for this study was, "How do couples experience the process of change that occurs when men who have been abusive end the abuse and make significant personal changes?" The aim was to "discover" a theory to describe the process of change that occurred in relationships when the problem of wife abuse was addressed and a positive outcome was achieved. I was interested in gaining an understanding of the process from the perspective of the participants and, thus, set out to systematically gather and analyze their narrative descriptions in order to formulate a comprehensive theory, grounded in their reality.

The proposed research question was clearly a qualitative one. That is, the focus was on "meaning," "experience," and "process" rather than on the prediction of relationships between variables and the testing of hypotheses. There is, at this point in time, a lack of comprehensive theory to adequately explain the phenomenon of wife abuse and therefore a verification study would be inappropriate. Although efforts have been made to apply existing theories in the study of wife abuse, it would appear that, as yet, few have been developed out of the lived experience of the population itself. Walker (1974) applied the theory of learned helplessness to battered women and Maertz (1990) employed Ellis' theory of irrational beliefs in his study of women in a battered women's shelter. Although both of these studies generated interesting results, research which attempts to fit data into a pre-existing framework has been criticized for promoting a narrow and potentially biased perspective. As Mishler

(1979) cautions, traditional methods can tempt researchers to restrict the focus of their interest and lead to "methods determining the problem investigated rather than the other way around (p. 7)."

Although not without its critics (Layder, 1982), the grounded theory method provides an alternative to the traditional deductive approaches. The specific strengths of this methodology are articulated by Quartaro (1986) in her delineation of the grounded theory approach. As she states:

> The researcher can study the phenomenon as it occurs in the real world, can use those who participate in or experience the phenomenon as informants, can gather data from a variety of sources and can mix sources if that is consistent with the nature of the phenomenon. In addition, the researcher need not exhume or extend some inadequate extant theory in order to justify the testing of hypotheses which may be only tangentially related to the researcher's real focus. Instead, the researcher can start from the position of one who wishes to learn about something that is not well understood. (p. 7)

Description of Grounded Theory Method

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach whose aim is to generate theory about social and psychological phenomena (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). It emphasizes discovery and the integration of inductive and deductive processes. The purpose is not theory verification but, rather, the identification of an area of study and systematic collection and analysis of data such that a relevant theory, "grounded" in the data, emerges (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Grounded theory methodology was originally developed and described by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). Their collaborative efforts provided a systematic and comprehensive technology for qualitative researchers and their evolving ideas remain the fundamental source that guides current grounded theory research (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss &

Corbin, 1990). Although developed within the field of sociology, the utility of this method in other areas including education (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), psychology (Quartaro, 1986; Rennie et al., 1988), and nursing (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Field & Morse, 1985; Stern, 1980), is well recognized.

Glaser (1978) describes four criteria essential for a grounded theory:

1. It should be believable in that it should seem to the reader to be a plausible explanation.
2. It should be adequate in that it should present a comprehensive account that does not omit large or important portions of the data.
3. It should be grounded in terms of the appropriate procedures and, thereby, inductively tied to the data.
4. It should be applicable and should lead to hypotheses and additional investigation.

Theoretical framework. The theoretical framework of the grounded theory approach is provided by symbolic interactionism. Herbert Blumer (1969) drew on the early works of G.H. Mead, Cooley, and Dewey to elaborate the three basic premises underlying symbolic interactionism.

First, that "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them." Second, the "meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows." Third, "these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer, 1969, p.2).

In light of these premises, grounded theorists conduct research that emphasizes understanding reality from the individual's perspective. They set out to discover how it is that participants derive and describe meaning in a

particular situation or in relation to a particular phenomenon. In addition, grounded theorists take into account change, process, variability, and complexity, seeking to understand people in their natural settings as they are influenced by social rules, ideologies, and events (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1989).

Theoretical sampling. The grounded theory method stands with other qualitative approaches as distinct from traditional research methods with regard to sampling procedures. Whereas in traditional quantitative studies, a sample is selected from the general population based on certain variables, in grounded theory research the sample is selected based on its ability to adequately represent the phenomenon under study. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) "the aim of theoretical sampling is to sample events, incidents, and so forth, that are indicative of categories, their properties, and dimensions, so that you can develop and conceptually relate them" (p. 177). Data analysis and data collection proceed simultaneously, with new data sources sought in order to clarify the emerging theory. Rennie et al. (1988) refer to this as "theory-based data selection" (p. 142) as the inclusion of new data sources makes possible a description of the conditions and limitations of the theory.

The constant comparative method. The intricate recursive relationship between data collection and data analysis is systematized by the constant comparative method and theoretical sampling. The constant comparative method involves close scrutiny of the data, organizing and sorting the information into codes or meaning units that describe the properties of the data, and continually comparing every piece of information with every other piece (Charmaz, 1986). Initially, the aim is to determine what is central and crucial to the phenomenon so informants are selected who are

thought to be representative of the topic of study and who are relatively similar to each other (Rennie et al., 1988). This provides maximal opportunity for the properties and dimensions of the phenomenon to clearly emerge.

The initial analysis involves "substantive" coding, meaning that the codes reflect the substance of what the informant said or did. Often the actual words of the person are used in the code (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). These codes are then compared with clusters of similar codes, forming a category. Open coding allows a particular unit of analysis to be placed in as many categories as possible (Glaser, 1978). As more data are collected, more categories emerge. Relationships between categories are recognized, patterns become evident, and analysis moves to include "theoretical" codes which give order to the interrelationships. These researcher-constructed categories "help to explain the descriptive categories and the relationships among them" and often subsume them (Rennie et al., 1988).

As the process of data analysis and conceptualization continues, new data sources are sought that introduce greater variability and diversity with respect to the phenomenon (Quartaro, 1986). This offers the opportunity to "identify some of the contours of the phenomenon" (Quartaro, 1986, p. 4) by the examination of limiting or "negative" cases (Field & Morse, 1985). As more and more data are added and analyzed, a network of category relationships is established and organized in a hierarchy of increasing abstraction (Quartaro, 1986). A "core" category eventually emerges and is recognized as the most central category, the best able to explain the relationships among the rest, the best description of the phenomenon being studied (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

As more data are analyzed it becomes evident that certain categories are "saturated." That is, additional

data add only to the weight of examples, not to the development of new categories or to the description of new properties or relationships between them (Quartaro, 1986). Saturation of the categories occurs gradually throughout the process, with peripheral categories saturating first and the more central categories being the last to saturate. It is speculated that saturation typically occurs after the analysis of five to ten protocols (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Memo writing. Throughout the research process the investigator keeps a detailed written record of ideas, hunches, and assumptions related to the project. This systematic recording serves as an important intermediate step between "the barebones analytic framework that coding provides" and the "polished ideas developed in the finished draft" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Memos help the researcher gain insight into her assumptions, provide an arena for speculations about the data, categories, or relationships between categories, and allow for premature ideas to be preserved (Rennie et al., 1988). They serve an integral function in the conceptualization process as the theory emerges.

Trustworthiness

Acceptance of the naturalistic paradigm and application of qualitative methodology requires the development of appropriate criteria for the evaluation of research as well as an appropriate language to describe the process. Terms such as internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity are typically associated with the conventional paradigm and, thus, do not readily fit in determining the value of research findings obtained by means of alternative methodologies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have addressed the need for a means of systematically evaluating naturalistic studies and outline alternative criteria for determining the "trustworthiness" of qualitative research

including credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility. The term credibility is identified as an alternative to the conventional criterion of internal validity and refers to the accuracy with which the findings reflect the phenomenon being investigated and convey the reality of the informants (Field & Morse, 1985).

The two main threats to credibility in a grounded theory study involve the subjectivity of the researcher and the use of verbal reports as data. Regarding subjectivity, Rennie et al. (1988) suggest that a grounded theory is credible to the extent that "the inferencing processes of the grounded analyst have been demystified" and "the categories underpinning the theory have been documented" (p. 146). It is openly acknowledged that it is not possible, or even desirable, for the qualitative researcher to remain "objective" during the collection and analysis of data. In the present study the investigator attempted to identify the biases, assumptions, and subjective factors that she brought to the project, recording them in the form of memos. "Bracketing" these beliefs prior to, as well as during, data collection and analysis served to bring them into the open and decrease the likelihood of them threatening the credibility of the findings. In addition, the elaboration of each category included representative quotes from informants in order to assure that the theory reflected their experience, not the researcher's. All informants were asked to verify the accuracy of their transcripts. The categories were also discussed with the informants to determine the "fit" between their experience and the emerging theory.

An additional threat to credibility is the use of verbal reports as data. Rennie et al. (1988) discuss the ongoing debate regarding informants' ability to accurately

convey internal experiences in an interview setting. Field and Morse (1985) acknowledge that there is some risk that information might be omitted or that informants might tell the researcher what they think she wants to hear but concede that there is no other way to understand the meanings that informants attach to their experience. In order to minimize this threat in the current study the informants were interviewed on more than one occasion, with, and without, their partner present. In-depth interviews focused on gaining "rich," "real," and "deep" data, however, combined with the use of the constant comparative method which shows the tendency of similar data to emerge from different sources, provide the main assurance of credibility (Rennie et al., 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1984, p. 402).

Transferability. Transferability relates to the conventional criterion of external validity or generalizability and refers to the applicability of the results of one study in a different context. Since generalizability is dependent on random sampling, it clearly runs counter to the aims of grounded theory which are to specifically select a limited number of informants in order to formulate a theory. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) state:

> ... the naturalist cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. (p.316)

Rennie et al. (1988) underscore that the objective of grounded theory is to seek intimacy with the phenomenon rather than evidence of generalizability. That is not to say that the findings of a grounded theory study might not resonate to other contexts but, rather, that the responsibility for verification lies with subsequent investigators.

Dependability. Lincoln and Guba substitute the term

dependability for the conventional criterion of reliability or replicability (1985). Although it is recognized that the flexibility inherent in the grounded theory method might lead to different researchers emphasizing different things in the exploration of a particular phenomenon, the "audit trail" makes it possible for future investigators to systematically replicate the research plan. The audit trail includes a careful description of the informants and the means by which they were selected, clear elaboration of the process of data collection and data analysis, and the recording of the decision-making process involved in the identification of categories. Memos provide the ongoing record of information essential to the audit trail.

Confirmability. Confirmability arises from the conventional criterion of objectivity which requires that an investigation be value-free and that the observer maintain a distance from that which is being observed. As stated above, the grounded theorist does not claim to be value-free or distant but, rather, acknowledges her/his influence and "brackets" her/his values and assumptions throughout the research process in the form of memos. The audit trail also assists in the determination of confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Implementation of the Present Study

Informant selection.

As described earlier, in the grounded theory method of research selection of informants is deliberate rather than random. The informant selection process takes into consideration an individual's personal experience with regard to the phenomenon being investigated as well as his/her willingness and ability to articulate that experience.

In the present study the following criteria were identified in order to provide focus to the area of

investigation.

1. The husband must have engaged in individual and/or group therapy to address the problem of wife abuse.

2. The couple must, at the time of the study, identify themselves as partners (though they may not necessarily live together).

3. Both parties must agree that the abuse has stopped.

4. The informants must be willing and able to reflect on and articulate a description of their personal experiences.

The investigator obtained the names of potential informants from the Men's Crisis Counsellor at a local Women's Shelter and from the Clinical Director of a local counselling agency. All informant couples were provided with general information about the study and gave permission for their names to be passed on to the investigator. The investigator made initial contact by telephone and arranged the first meeting. Interviews took place between September, 1992 and February, 1993 with follow-up interviews occurring from January, 1993 to August, 1993. In all, five couples participated in the study. One additional couple was contacted but refused to participate, with the wife reporting that her husband was unwilling.

In each case the couples were initially interviewed together. At this time they were fully informed about the study and encouraged to ask questions. They were provided with an Information sheet (Appendix A) and each signed an Informed Consent sheet (Appendix B). Three of the couples chose to meet with the investigator in their homes. The fourth requested that the meeting be held at the counselling agency that they both had previously attended. The fifth couple met with the investigator at her private office.

After the initial interview the informants were interviewed individually, again at the location of their

choice. Follow-up interviews were conducted individually for three couples and jointly for two pairs. A total of twenty-three interviews were conducted.

Variability of informants was sought by selecting couples who differed with regard to several characteristics. There was a relatively broad age range represented in the group, with two informants in their late twenties and two in their early fifties. The remaining six were in their thirties and early forties. There was also variability with respect to the amount of violence in the relationship. One woman had suffered numerous physical injuries and was, on one occasion, hospitalized after being beaten by her husband. Two women were physically injured by their partners on several occasions. The fourth woman was bruised once in her current relationship but experienced severe emotional and sexual abuse over a period of twenty years in her first marriage. The fifth woman experienced eight years of verbal abuse but was physically struck just once. The duration of relationships represented by the informants ranged from three to twenty years. The length of time which the couples described as free of physical abuse ranged from one year to three years.

All male informants attended a fourteen to sixteen week group-format program (which they referred to as an Anger Management course) at one of two local agencies. The following brief descriptions of the programs are presented in order to provide the reader with a sense of the nature of treatment that the men experienced. First, the Pastoral Institute offers a fourteen week course for men who batter. The course emphasizes the benefits of a group format "since it tends to decrease isolation and provides ample opportunity for participants to practice awareness-raising exercises and interpersonal skills as well as provide peer confrontation and support" (Porte, 1984). The course

includes didactic and experiential presentation of the following topics: understanding anger; dysfunctional thinking; coping with anger in conflict situations; dealing with stress; learning to benefit from your feelings; responding to the concerns of others; how to express your concerns; opening the way for conflict resolution; problem-solving; values and anger management; sex-role expectations; self-esteem and; maintenance planning. The sixteen week program for men offered by the YWCA Support Centre presents the topics of: understanding types of abuse; taking responsibility for abuse; the cycle of violence; understanding anger; constructive conflict resolution skills; promoting an equal man/woman relationship; communication skills; feelings and empathy; recognizing and managing stress and; self-esteem.

Data gathering. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Interviews lasted approximately ninety minutes each. Informants were given a copy of the transcripts prior to the follow-up meeting. The open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the primary investigator and were guided by the following questions:

1. Describe your relationship -- how you met each other, what your early times together were like, how your relationship changed and developed over time -- the "story" of your relationship.

2. Whereas at one point in your relationship conflict often led to abuse, these days things get dealt with in a different manner. How do you account for the change? What made you decide to change?

3. Describe, if you can, a critical incident that clearly demonstrated to you that a change had taken place?

4. What was most helpful in making the change possible? -- in maintaining the change?

The individual interviews followed up on the initial

conversations and further explored background information and the change process. Informants were asked about their perceptions regarding the roots of the violence in their relationship.

The questions set the context for the interviews and were not rigidly presented. For the most part, the investigator attempted to keep her questioning to a minimum, allowing the informants freedom to tell their stories in their own way.

In later interviews, questioning became more focused in an effort to flesh out developing categories. For example, the researcher might ask "Other men have talked about the connection between their abusiveness and substance abuse. What is your experience of the relationship between substance abuse and wife abuse?"

Data analysis. Data analysis began on completion of the first interview and served as a building block for successive interviews as well as subsequent informant selection. Data were entered into The Ethnograph, a computer program designed to assist in the analysis of qualitative data. Initial codes were descriptive in nature with eighty-nine substantive codes identified. These codes were then compared with clusters of similar codes to form categories. Coding then moved to a more theoretical level to describe the complex interrelationships between categories with broader categories, thus, identified and subcategories subsumed under each. Two core categories emerged, reflecting the two distinct processes conveyed by the informants.

Memos were written throughout the process, detailing the researcher's ideas and hunches about the data and the emerging theory. These memos were sorted, categorized, and utilized as data, assisting the researcher to move from the concrete and descriptive to the abstract and theoretical as

the study proceeded.

Bracketing

One of the essential components of the grounded theory approach is the bracketing of personal biases and assumptions brought to the study by the researcher. Unlike traditional methods that attempt to remove the impact of the researcher and make her/him an objective bystander, the grounded theory method requires an acknowledgement and declaration of the researcher's subjectivity with respect to the phenomenon under investigation.

The personal biases and assumptions that are clearly central to the current investigation arise from my experience as a female in a patriarchal society. Although fortunate to have escaped the trauma of physical abuse, I have felt the inescapable impact of marginalization and the resultant tendency to question my competency and credibility. As a nurse in the hierarchical, patriarchal medical system and as a graduate student in a department that, at the time, had an exclusively male faculty I was presented with a clear picture of the power of men over women. On one occasion when I asked about the best ways to prepare for an upcoming oral exam, the professor told me (jokingly, of course) to wear a low-cut dress. This experience, and many like it, have served to fuel an anger that continues to burn -- an anger about the injustice in a world that takes the views of one half of the population more seriously than those of the other half, an anger about a world that promotes fighting and winning over cooperating and negotiating, an anger about a world where everywhere certain people hold and abuse power over those who are vulnerable.

As a counsellor, I have worked with many female clients who come to therapy with symptoms of depression and describe a life of incredible oppression. These women view their

problems as internal and want to change so that they can "handle things better."

I initiated the current study with some trepidation. As a feminist, I am both cognizant and supportive of the feminist critique of systemic theory and practice for taking a neutral stance with respect to wife abuse. In no way did I wish to contribute further weight to the burdensome literature that, directly or indirectly, blames victims of abuse for their plight. At the same time, however, I felt strongly that to interview only the women in relationships where there had been abuse would be limiting, providing only part of the picture of the interpersonal dynamics involved in the process of change that takes place. I wanted to hear both sides of the story and, thus, set out to hear the stories of men and women, mindful always to signs that women might be feeling silenced and alert to my own internal emotions and reactions.

Although I did not have access to a research support group per se, I sought consultation with four colleagues who had recently conducted grounded theory research. These conversations were very helpful and provided the boost needed to get out of various ruts along the research path.

In addition, I met with professionals working in the area to solicit their feedback about the evolving theoretical model. They were able to support the "fit" of the model with their clinical experience.

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were handled in accordance with the guidelines presented by the University of Alberta, General Faculties Council and the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (1991).

All informants were fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study, the potential risks and benefits, and their rights as voluntary participants. They were

encouraged to ask questions at any time and were assured that they were under no obligation to answer any question they were uncomfortable with. All informants gave voluntary consent by signing the consent form (Appendix B).

It was recognized that discussion of painful memories might trigger significant emotional distress for informants. The welfare of informants was maintained as the highest priority and the researcher, thus, attended to the emotional reactions brought forth in the discussions. In light of the content area of the interviews, particular attention was paid to signs of defensiveness in the male partners or fear in the females. For example, on several occasions when a female informant was recalling her intense negative feelings toward her partner the researcher asked the male partner "if he could handle what his partner was saying." Informants were offered the opportunity to access immediate counselling support should the need arise.

In terms of confidentiality of information, the following steps were taken. All tapes were kept in my care during data collection with the contents to be erased at the end of the study. The typist was required to swear an oath of confidentiality and identifiable data were discussed only with co-professionals. To ensure anonymity transcripts were coded by number rather than name and compilation of this final report included the removal of all identifiable information. Copies of all transcripts will remain the property of the investigator. Informants were given a copy of their own transcript following the first interview.

The completed report will be submitted to the University of Alberta library and subject to the normal regulations regarding rights to release of library material.

Demographics of the Informants

The ten individuals who participated in the current study ranged in age from late twenties to early fifties.

All were caucasian. Two couples were living common-law at the time of the study. One of these had lived together for four years and had two children. The other was planning to be married in the near future after living together for twelve years. They have two children with the eldest being from her previous marriage. He has a grown child from his first marriage whom he has not seen for over ten years. Of the three married couples one had been together for twenty years, married for eighteen. They have two children. The second had been married for eight years, with one child from the wife's previous relationship. The last couple, also married eight years, each had grown children from their first marriages. Children of the informants ranged in age from eighteen months to thirty-two years with two preschoolers, three school-age children, two adolescents, and six adults.

All ten informants had attained at least a high school education. Two of the men had specialized training in a trade. Two women and two men had college level education. One man had a university degree and one woman was in her final year of a degree program. With the exception of the full time student, all informants were employed at the time of the study in positions of management, business and office work, health care, the trades, and education.

Introduction of the Informants

The theoretical formulations presented in Chapter Four were derived from the narratives of the ten individuals who participated in the study. As stated above, common themes were identified, and a unifying process emerged from the data. While this compilation of data accurately reflects the experiences of the informants, and the demographic information presented above accurately describes the group, this does not seem to do justice to the powerful personal stories of these men and women. In the following pages

elaboration of these individual stories will provide a better understanding and appreciation of the struggles that these people have faced and the courage they have shown in exposing themselves. Necessary steps have been taken to assure the anonymity of the informants while attempting to highlight the important elements of their narratives.

Ann and Ray.

Ann is in her late thirties, the eldest of three children raised in a small community in western Canada. As a young girl she assumed responsibility for caring for her younger siblings a great deal of the time. From the age of thirteen she worked outside the home to contribute to the family finances and maintained an honours standing in school. She was beaten as a child by her mother and experienced long-standing conflict in that relationship. She adored her alcoholic father, despite his critical ways and his tyrannical outbursts. At seventeen when she approached her parents about the possibility of attending college she was told there was "not a snowball's chance in hell" so she left home to find work in the city. Despite financial and personal hardships and with much perseverance she landed a job with a national corporation. She has remained employed there for over twenty years and has been transferred and promoted to a managerial position. Ann was married to a man several years her senior. He was physically and verbally abusive to her and managed to align himself with her mother such that after she left him her parents were angry at her and took him in to their home. Ann had one child in this marriage. She met Ray at an AA meeting and they were immediately attracted to one another.

Ray is also in his late thirties. He was the youngest in a family of three. His parents had two daughters prior to adopting him. Growing up he felt resentment from his sisters who saw him as favoured and spoiled and rejection

from his grandparents who felt he was not "blood." His father was a military man and a strict disciplinarian. Drinking was part of Ray's early training. As early as fourteen he would sit at the kitchen table and drink and argue with his father while his mother sat watching from the sidelines. This would typically continue until someone got angry and started fighting or smashing things. Ray's mother was university educated but his father did not allow her to work. Ray recalls his mother telling him never to hold a woman back from her career, that to do so would be like "pounding a nail into her coffin." Ray was married and became a father at the age of seventeen. The relationship lasted six years and was marked by irresponsibility, infidelity, and physical abuse of his wife.

Ray and Ann spent their early years together partying and "breaking all the rules." After a time, Ann decided that it was time to settle down and have another child. The abuse that was initially described as an occasional outcome of drinking combined with stubbornness became a more frequent occurrence, escalating during Ann's pregnancy, then settling for a few months after when Ray was unemployed and they were both at home. It resumed again after Ann returned to work. She worked nights and would often smuggle the children to work with her because Ray had not come home from the bar. Ray was employed sporadically and continued drinking heavily. At one point he attended an alcohol treatment program and remained sober for about six months.

Ann went to a Women's Shelter four times and each time Ray talked her into returning home. While she was in the shelter she continued her efforts to deny and minimize the abuse to people at work and in the community, explaining away the bruises and welts. Finally, the eldest child asked the school guidance counsellor for information about alcoholism and a Child Welfare investigation was initiated.

They were mandated to attend family counselling but after a few sessions Ray refused to continue.

The final crisis was precipitated by the combination of several factors. Ray had been injured at work and was prescribed analgesics. The medication, in conjunction with ongoing substance abuse, led to increasingly violent and bizarre behaviour as well as significant physical deterioration. In addition, Ann began to see the serious risk to her children. One evening Ray smashed the telephone with a sledge hammer after their teenager had received a call from a friend. Ann escaped with both children and went to the Shelter for the fifth and final time. She stayed there for over three weeks. During this time Ray quit drinking, went through the DT's, and resolved to get help for himself. He called a Men's Crisis Counsellor, attended several individual counselling sessions, then went on to a fourteen week treatment program. He also returned to AA.

Ray has now been sober for over a year and has obtained full time employment. He is actively involved with the family and is working to develop a new social network. He is once again pursuing his individual interest in art and plans to take some courses. He and Ann enjoy browsing through flea markets, attending bingo and working on home renovations. In addition to his ongoing efforts at rebuilding his marital relationship he expresses commitment to improving his parenting skills.

Ann has become a person for herself. She participates in activities that she is interested in without fear that it might not please Ray. She trusts that he can and will take on his share of responsibility in parenting and no longer feels like she has to be "superorganizer." She worries about the impact of the years of abuse on the children, however, she is encouraged by the gains she sees them making as a result of their counselling and being part of a healthy

family environment.

Jane and Al

Jane is a thirty year old university student. She is the middle of three children, raised in a small community in central Canada. She describes her upbringing as very positive and her parents as calm and loving people. Jane was taught domestic skills like sewing and cooking but was also encouraged to pursue activities such as horseback riding. Although her mother remained at home while Jane was growing up, she has since taken courses, works outside the home, and, according to Jane, has "blossomed."

Jane did very well in school and obtained scholarships to attend university. She gave birth to a child around this time and juggled full time studies and single parenthood. After moving across the country and switching to a college-based program she found the stress of her situation to be too much and went home for a break. She met up with Al who she had known on a friendly basis during high school. They made a quick decision to move west and live together. She worked and attended university. He began an apprenticeship program.

Al grew up as the middle child in a family of six in the same community as Jane. His family was very poor and because of this his mother had to work outside the home. There was little supervision of the children and no time for family outings or activities. Al recalls that he was always a hard worker and a hot-headed fighter like his dad and brothers.

Jane and Al remember their early years together as stressful and conflict-ridden with worries about money predominating. Arguments would often escalate to "screaming and roaring" with Jane initially being taken aback, then learning to weigh the relative advantages of fighting back or staying quiet. She acted to protect her daughter from

Al's outbursts and worked to keep the waters smooth. On one occasion Al physically struck Jane. She immediately contacted the police to determine her rights and made plans to leave the relationship. Al sought assistance from a local counselling agency and was referred to a fourteen week counselling program for men. He was initially shocked by the stories of abuse that he heard from the other men and felt glad to have the opportunity to deal with his problems before they got that severe. Jane did not attend therapy for herself, stating that the problem was clearly Al's. She agreed to participate should Al or his counsellors feel it necessary. Both partners describe the changes in Al and in their relationship as remarkable.

Marg and Bob

Marg is in her mid-fifties. She was raised in what she describes as a crazy-making family. Her mother was physically and emotionally abusive, involved in fundamentalist religious activities. Marg worshipped her father when she was growing up but came to see that, although he did not abuse her, neither did he stand up for her when she was treated unfairly. Marg was the eldest of three. The younger children were close in age to each other, born more than ten years after Marg. Marg married a military man at eighteen and had two sons. She survived for over twenty years in this relationship which looked very good from the outside but was actually highly abusive, emotionally and sexually. Marg covered her pain with alcohol and tranquilizers and eventually left the relationship and the city. She credits Alcoholics Anonymous with saving her life and remains active in the organization with over fifteen years of sobriety. She met Bob, also an AA member, through mutual friends. They established a friendship but were slow to make a commitment. Marg was shocked when she encountered the critical, verbally abusive

side of Bob. In addition to the unpredictable angry outbursts Bob would, without warning, disappear for days or weeks at a time. Although episodes of physical abuse were rare, verbal abuse and threats were not and Marg recalls feeling intense fear for her safety.

Bob is also in his fifties. He was raised in a middle-class family in an eastern Canadian city. He has one brother who is close in age to him and quite successful in his profession. He describes his early years as positive and his parents' relationship as loving although not demonstrative. Bob began drinking quite heavily in university and continued throughout the next fifteen years. He married and had three children and was divorced after eight years. According to Bob, there was no physical abuse in that relationship although there was verbal abuse.

Marg and Bob describe the positive changes in their relationship as occurring over many years and comprised of several steps including attending individual and couple counselling, Bob's participation in an Anger Management course, a six month marital separation, and Bob's receiving the diagnosis of Major Affective Disorder and antidepressant therapy.

Bea and Joe

Bea is in her thirties, the middle in a family of three. Her father was an alcoholic who controlled and dominated the family she grew up in. Bea recalls her father's constant belittling and criticism of her mother and her mother's tendency to doubt herself and cave in to her father. Bea met Joe in high school and married soon after graduation. They fought a lot from the outset of their relationship and Joe was very jealous and possessive. She recalls that friends predicted their marriage wouldn't last a year.

Joe is the second in a family of five. Throughout his

growing up years he perceived himself as trying and failing to meet his father's approval. He was less athletic than his brothers and felt on the outside of many activities. Joe describes his parents' relationship as generally good but admits that since he has begun to explore and make changes to his own behaviours and attitudes he has been disturbed by the disrespectful way his father treats his mother. He was previously not cognizant of his father's sexist beliefs and comments but feels now that he incorporated these into his own value system and extended them into the realm of physical abuse in his own marriage.

People who have become aware of the abuse in Bea and Joe's relationship have expressed amazement, stating that they just don't fit the stereotype. They live in a nice home, have well-behaved children, and are active in the church and community. Both Bea and Joe hold responsible positions and get along well with co-workers. They socialize and mix with a variety of people.

The physical abuse in Bea and Joe's marriage was well-contained over the years. Only on the last occasion did it spill out into the street to be observed by the children and others. The criticisms, the cutting comments, and the threats of violence were pervasive, however. Joe felt he needed to control everything but couldn't control anything. He felt like Bea was out to get him at every turn, trying to make him look stupid. For her part, although she knew that he felt intimidated by her, she could not understand why because, from her standpoint, he clearly had control of the situation. She was under his thumb. It has been over three years now since Joe opened up to his priest and subsequently to his treatment group. He still meets with some of those men because he feels that it's important for them not to forget where they came from in order to be vigilant to any drift back into old ways. Family life is different now.

Joe is involved with the children, does the grocery shopping, helps with the housework, and participates in all aspects of family life.

Bea credits her group therapy with saving her life. The group helped her to value her own experience and exert her rights. Although she was very sceptical about Joe's changes at first she now believes that he truly has transformed at a deep level. But it has taken a long time for that trust to develop. Initially all she had was anger and more anger. The anger that was pent up during the years she was afraid to express it got expressed in the early months of change.

Carol and Dan

Carol is in her late twenties. She was raised in an eastern Canadian city, third in a family of four. She has an older brother and sister and a younger sister. Carol was a good girl -- responsible, bright, and caring. Her mother worked outside the home and, as a result, Carol learned to cook and clean and look after things at home. In her youth she experimented with "the wild side," partying and dating a number of young men. She found most of these men to be quite predictable and less than challenging until she met Dan. He was different, certainly not predictable, and definitely a challenge. Their dating relationship was romantic and rocky and they were soon living together, the parents of a new baby. Carol had never been in a committed relationship with the responsibilities of managing a house and caring for an infant. She didn't know what to expect but she certainly knew she didn't expect to be hit or ridiculed.

Dan is in his early thirties. He has an older sister and a younger sister. His parents ran a family business while he was growing up and he remembers being raised mainly by his older sister who was physically and emotionally very abusive of him. He ran away from home a few times as a

child, began working when he was fifteen and, although he managed to finish high school, was more or less away from home from then on.

When physical abuse erupted in the relationship Carol sought support from her family and friends. She felt confused and uncertain. During this time of confusion she phoned a Women's Shelter for help. She felt chastised by the counsellor for not knowing what she wanted. Did she want to leave the relationship? At that point she didn't know what she wanted. She continued to seek refuge at her parents' home after being beaten. After a time they forbade Dan from coming to their home. Carol experienced this as a rejection of her and began to seek support from Dan's parents.

Carol recalls reaching her "snapping point" sometime late in her second pregnancy but felt too vulnerable and dependent to leave the relationship then. Soon after she returned home from the hospital with the new baby Dan assaulted her. She packed her bags the next day and left for the shelter. Carol and Dan were separated for four months. He attended a fourteen week group program for men and she participated in a group for battered women. After that they attended a follow-up couples group. Both Carol and Dan describe significant changes in their relationship and a commitment to ongoing work. Dan is now able to recognize his abusive behaviours as such and sees abusive dynamics in interactions where he couldn't before. They are working to rebuild their connection with extended family members as well as establish a new social network.

CHAPTER FOUR

From a Cyclone of Fear to a Spiral of Respect: Positive Outcomes In the Treatment of Wife Abuse

Introduction

The results of the current study evolved into a theoretical model describing the experience of couples who were caught in a fear-dominated relationship and worked to transform that relationship into one characterized by equality and mutual respect. The model, presented in Figure 1, is represented visually as a downward spiral on one side, reaching a turning point, then spiralling in an upward direction. This visual representation was supported as an accurate fit by the research informants, one of whom identified the spiral of fear as "a cyclone," with the abuse occurring only occasionally in the early phases, then intensifying over time, finally reaching a crisis or turning point. Similarly, the image of widening spirals fit for informants' experience of the change or recovery process. The initial phases were marked by intensity and close attention to every interaction as couples began the rebuilding of their relationship. The spirals widened as they were able to trust in the stability of their new ways and extend their focus beyond the marital relationship to include other family and community connections.

Utilizing overlapping spirals, the model emphasises the circular and reflexive nature of the process and moves away from a linear conceptualization of stages. The process is punctuated by conceptual categories or significant themes that were common in the participant couples' stories. Categories of 1) sex-role socialization, 2) the early relationship, 3) organizing around the abuse, 4) escalation of the abuse, and 5) turning point, emerged from the abuse-dominated stories. The stories of recovery brought forth categories of 1) accepting responsibility, 2) therapy,

FROM A CYCLONE OF FEAR TO A SPIRAL OF RESPECT: POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN THE TREATMENT OF WIFE ABUSE

FEAR OF DIFFERENCE

Sex role socialization
- -becoming a man
- -becoming a woman
- -men and women in relationships

The early relationship
- -forming the relationship
- -early abuse

Organizing around the abuse
- -explanations for the abuse
- -strategies for coping

Escalation
- -worsening
- -risk to children

Turning point
- -despair/loss of hope
- -ultimatum

RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCE

Ongoing development
- -a new relationship
- -a new family life
- -beyond the relationship

Rebuilding: Together in new ways
- -new patterns
- -vigilance
- -rebuilding trust

Therapy: Separate Work
- -women's changes
- -men's changes

Accepting Responsibility
- -men for the abuse
- -women for their rights

Figure 1. A Conceptual Model Describing the Experience of, and Recovery From, a Wife-abusive Relationship

3) rebuilding, and 4) ongoing development. Subcategories of critical issues related to each major category were identified under each. There is, thus, a hierarchical arrangement of subcategories and categories, moving from the particular and concrete to more general and abstract with the core category or Basic Social Psychological Process (BSPP) describing the central or overriding process.

Two BSPP's were identified in the current study as the informant couples articulated two clearly distinct "stories," a story of abuse and a story of change and recovery. The Basic Social Psychological Process (BSPP) that emerged from the informants' reflections of their abuse-dominated relationship was identified as **Fear of Difference**. This fear related to both partners' feeling that to act in a manner different than that of their particular role expectation could be threatening -- to their sense of identity and/or to the marital relationship. Interpersonal differences were also threatening. During the time that the women were being abused by their partners there was only room for one point of view, the men's point of view. When the women disagreed, the result was conflict that could potentially escalate to physical abuse. Women faced the decision of fighting to uphold their point of view with the fear of risking abuse, or sacrificing their point of view and, hence, their sense of identity. For the husbands, differences represented a threat to their sense of control -- of themselves and of their partners. The **Fear of Difference** prevailed throughout the downward spiral of the cyclone until the critical turning point was reached.

As couples describe the process of change and recovery, a central theme or BSPP of **Respect for Difference** emerges. This represents a remarkably different way of life for these couples. It becomes possible for them to "agree to disagree." The men become able to tolerate differences and

women, thus, feel safe in expressing their views. The men come to see their partners as allies rather than adversaries. They describe their relationship as a friendship where each is committed to the union and free to pursue individual interests as well. Both partners express a concern for the next generation and the wider community as well as a lifelong commitment to self and relationship improvement.

The remainder of this chapter will present a detailed description of the model derived from the present study. The model is diagramatically presented in Figure 1. In order to stay close to the informants' lived experience there will be frequent utilization of quotes from actual interviews.

A Cyclone of Fear: Fear of Difference

The stories of people cannot be segregated from the social context out of which they arise. The ten individuals participating in the current study reflect the values of the family and community in which they were brought up. The experience of being raised as a boy or as a girl in a patriarchal society influences the development of distinct sex roles, roles in which there is a power differential that sets the stage for the marginalization and abuse of women. In most cases, the socialization of these ten informants included clearly defined sex-role expectations, with sanctions for gender-appropriate behaviours and attitudes and negative consequences for failing to adhere to the prescriptions.

Sex Role Socialization

Socialization in a family and community context of patriarchy provides women and men with rules to follow and roles to fulfil. Their parents serve as primary role models in terms of what men do, what women do, and what relationships look like.

The ten informants unanimously describe their parents' relationships as "traditional" but descriptions of their families vary greatly, ranging from "fantastic" to "crazy-making." Two men were physically abused in their families, one by his father, one by an older sister. Similarly, two women experienced physical abuse as children, both at the hands of their mothers. Notably, although none of the ten informants witnessed or was aware of physical abuse of their mothers, four men and three women now recognize that their fathers exercised tremendous power and control over their mothers. One male informant describes his understanding of how the power differential played out in the relationship between his parents:

> My dad would never let (my mother) work. That was a big conflict with them. He's a "women should stay home and look after the children" type guy. It was a blow to his ego if my mom would -- even though she was a well-educated woman, a teacher -- she couldn't go out and get a job. It would hurt my dad so she stayed at home.

Similarly, two other informants, both female, saw their mother's access to the work force limited by their fathers. In one case, the mother began work outside the home out of necessity when her husband was ill. The other woman recalls the impossible restrictions set by her father when her mother wished to begin work:

> She wanted to take a job a couple days a week. And he was on his three shifts ... every week it would be a different shift. He told her it would be fine as long as she was there to make meals and eat with him at every meal. Then she could work. So in other words it was impossible. And that was the guideline that he set and there was no variation. There was no compromise.

The stories of these women reflect their subordination of individual goals and activities in service of marital harmony and the status quo.

Becoming a man. The male informants reflect on their early socialization as emphasizing being tough, both

physically and emotionally. Two of the men recall an early acceptance of the macho role, with no struggle or internal dissonance. For one of these, his fighting temperament is clearly accepted as a fundamental characteristic, an inborn trait:

> I remember as a kid in school, always fighting too, being hard to get along with. I guess I was born with it. I feel like that.

Another man remembers experiencing feelings of vulnerability as a child and holds vivid memories of events that painfully marked his toughening up process:

> I remember one specific incident as if it was yesterday. I came home with a 98% on a math test and (my dad's) response was, "What did you do with the other 2%?" And (now) I believe he meant a joke of it, but I know how much it affected me. Talk about getting crushed just like that. And rather than let him see how I really felt, I never showed anything.... I just thought, "He's not going to see me cry."

For this man, feelings of hurt or sadness were unacceptable and "feminine," and experiences like this one left him paradoxically resentful at his father's insensitivity and more determined not to be so sensitive himself.

One man described his upbringing in very positive terms but spoke with some regret about the lack of closeness between himself and his younger brother. He recalls their childhood relationship as very competitive and, even today, feels that, in his parents' eyes, his brother is more successful.

The male informants' reflections of their early family experiences show a common struggle in their relationship with their father, a struggle to connect with him and a struggle to meet his approval, to be like him and to be liked by him. Fathers were unanimously described as hard-working. Three of the five talked specifically of growing up seeing their fathers immersed in work and unavailable to their families:

> Dad? A hard worker. Just works and works and works.... I never experienced going fishing with my dad or playing baseball or anything like that. The only thing we ever did with him was go in the fall and get firewood. That...was the only thing we ever did with him until I got older and could work with him.

This within-family modelling of sex role appropriate behaviour combined with messages from outside the family to provide the male informants with definite guidelines for behaviour. One man recalls feeling like a misfit because of his "unmasculine" interests:

> And I don't know how many times going through school I was called a sissy because I played the piano. And all of those things hurt -- those kinds of messages.... and I guess I feel I didn't fit in at home. My brothers are all fairly athletic and I am not. And my dad was a fairly athletic person.... I've always wanted to, or felt I had to prove something to him. Prove to him that I was as good as everybody else in the family.

To be different in attitude or activity was viewed by this man as being "less than." Although he enjoyed a very close relationship with his mother, he recalls feeling, for much of his life "like a rabbit chasing a carrot," the carrot being held by his father.

In one of the more rigid family systems, brothers were afforded opportunities and privileges that sisters were denied:

> My dad would buy me a car. He never bought (my sisters) a car. But my dad thought that women weren't as good a drivers as men. And to this day neither one of my sisters drive, nor my mom.

Another man spoke of feeling envious of his sisters because, as he saw it, they were allowed and even encouraged to show their feelings. He and his brothers, in contrast, were taught to mask feelings that reflected weakness or vulnerability. He describes the costly consequences of this early training:

> But definitely you didn't show your feelings unless it was anger. It was real safe to show that. But it wasn't OK to cry.... So you shove it down and you don't

> express it.... Then after years and years and years you have this nice little wall built around you to protect you. The only way you let (feelings) out is the wrong way.

Woven throughout the stories of the five male informants is their strong desire to meet the standards of masculinity set by the family and community. The result of this socialization process, as one informant articulates, is a clear and concise credo for manhood:

> To be a man was to work, to drink, and to be tough. Basically that was it.

Becoming a woman. The five female informants were offered a very different credo during their development. Without exception, they recall learning at a very young age to be responsible and meet the expectations of others. The reflections of one woman echo those of other female informants as she recalls her early years:

> I was always proving myself -- how good I was, how angelic I was, how responsible I was.

In contrast to the men's memories of fighting to uphold their views, women remember learning early to acquiesce to others to avoid conflict. One woman remembers being reprimanded as a child for showing anger:

> I have never been allowed to show my anger. Because you certainly didn't show it when I was growing up. (You were told), "Get that look off your face!" You weren't allowed to be angry. You were just allowed to be pleasant.

All of the women experienced success in academic settings. One woman believes that it was her interpersonal sensitivity, her ability to perceive and meet the needs of others, that made it possible to maneuver successfully in school and job settings:

> I was really lucky because school came really easy to me. I have always had the ability to go out there and figure out what the big guy wants and give him just that. And therefore you can do wonderfully in that system.... That's my entire upbringing was learning to

> give exactly what was expected of me. I had no individuality whatsoever.

Two informants provide an interesting illustration of the "boys must be tough" and "girls must be good" characterization that was so frequently brought forth in the stories. The contrast is presented by this male and female (not partners) as they speak of their efforts to connect with their fathers in their workshops. The man remembers it being difficult to work with his father:

> Yeah, 'cause we are both hotheads. Many a time it would be (a fight). -- Out of the shop and into the house and -- "F__ you!" and "F__ you!"

The woman's father was also consumed by his work and also a hothead but her way of interacting with him was very different:

> I would be there and give him the tools that he asked for -- <u>right now</u>! I was doing what I was supposed to do. I tried my hardest to be whatever my dad wanted me to be.

For the boy and his father, a difference of opinion was something to fight about. The girl, on the other hand, made sure that no differences emerged. She complied with whatever her father wanted in order to keep him happy.

Throughout childhood, these men and women were reinforced for assuming gender-appropriate roles. They grew up observing these roles lived out in the relationships of the adults in their lives and came to construct their understanding of the world of relationships based on these observations.

<u>Men and women in relationships</u>. Over the course of their development the informants internalized the dynamics reflected in the patterns of interaction that they observed between their parents. From this they came to formulate their ideas about what to expect for themselves in intimate relationships. One man describes his view of male-female relationships as presented by his parents:

> (I learned) that men are the boss. We make all the major decisions. If a man makes up his mind ... there should be no discussion. ... Women are generally there to look after the house, to be the mother, to look after the children, to cater to the man, ... somebody to hang on the arm.

Another man with a similar parental model speaks of his acceptance of their relationship structure as normal, an acceptable prototype for his own marriage:

> I didn't notice it as an imbalance of power. I learned that that's the way things were. That's the way they are supposed to be. I can remember making this really dumb comment one day that, "No wife of mine is ever going to work." Because my mother has never worked outside of the home.

He grew up observing a structure that was based on a belief in male privilege and entitlement and did not consider the possibility of a different structure. Obviously his self examination over the past three years has led to an awareness of his previously unacknowledged sexism.

It must be noted, however, that although all of the informants describe their parents' relationship as traditional, not all experienced their upbringing as negative. One woman, in particular, provides an exception to the typical story. Although she described her parents marriage as "typical of the fifties -- Dad worked, Mom stayed at home," she did not view it as oppressive, and noted with pride that her mother recently obtained advanced education and employment outside the home. Her memories of her parents relationship are very positive:

> We saw affection (between parents). They'd kiss and hug. They kissed and hugged us. They argued but it never escalated beyond shouting and it ended in moments.

Growing up in this environment did not prepare this woman for the verbal abuse that erupted in her marital relationship. She was taken aback. And although she developed strategies for avoiding and coping with subsequent

verbal attacks, after the first physical assault she took action to terminate the relationship. This woman's family experience stands in marked contrast to that of other female informants who did not observe respectful interactions between their parents. One woman, in particular, saw her mother endure years of criticism and ridicule:

> I can see that, at some point, I learned that it was OK for a man to treat a woman with contempt because that's how (my father) treated (my mother).

Women who watched their mothers tolerate verbal abuse tended to put up with a great deal of abuse in their own marriages and maintained the strong code of silence dictating that family problems should be contained within the walls of the home. One female informant strongly believes that her reluctance to seek outside help when she was being abused was a result of the message she learned in her family of origin:

> It is whether or not you've been raised in that environment and you learned how to keep that secret when you were this high to how long you hold that secret (of being abused)....(We were told), "We don't air our laundry out in public and we don't go running to the police every time there is a fight." ... So, therefore when something went wrong -- like I didn't even talk to my parents. It also means that it took me a lot longer time to go and actually want to seek help for this.

As stated above, none of the informants witnessed their mothers being beaten. What four men and three women did see, however, was their fathers exerting tremendous control in the family and their mothers assuming a subordinate position, going to great lengths to maintain harmony. These mothers did not have a voice in decision-making. It was the fathers who held the final word as to where money would be spent, where the family would live, and whether or not his wife would work outside the home. One woman from an extremely father-dominated home remembers her father's controlling role in the family:

> He controlled money. He controlled everything, just everything. Meal times you couldn't talk. You couldn't have conversations because it bothered him. It interrupted his newspaper reading. Just everything I can think of, he controlled.... He was mean and he was nasty. No matter what (my mother) said, she was stupid, she was an idiot, she knew nothing.

This woman felt sorry for her mother and angry at her father. But at times when she voiced her anger her mother would defend her father and minimize his abuse, leaving the child confused and questioning her own experience.

In contrast to this negative view of father, two female informants described growing up holding their fathers on a pedestal and blaming their mothers for problems in the family. They experienced great conflict and struggle in their relationships with their mother and, only recently have come to appreciate the mother's story, recognizing the patterns of control and oppression that dominated her life:

> My dad, well, he was Mr. Wonderful. He never did anything wrong.... My mother was this huge bitch.... But through counselling I've been able to put things back into perspective.... It wasn't her. It was him through her a lot of the times. She was trying to smooth things over.

In their attempts to better understand themselves informants have given thoughtful, often painful attention to their early experiences and the messages that they received as they grew up in their family. As one woman states:

> When I went through all of this with (husband) and then when I went through (group) I had a lot of anger. I was angry at the home I had been raised in. I thought, "If I had been handed some better skills when I was growing up this wouldn't be happening to me now."

They now see that their family of origin served as a powerful training ground for patterns of patriarchal dominance and abuse and that these patterns prevailed into their intimate relationships. Men moved into adulthood holding rigidly to their beliefs about masculinity and with strategies for controlling both internal and external

experiences of "difference." Internal feelings of vulnerability were "pushed down" and external threats served as grounds for a fight. Women entered adulthood well aware of the risks associated with thinking or acting differently than the way in which they were expected to think and act.

The Early Relationship

Forming the relationship. The participant couples typically reflect on the beginning of their relationship as a time of intensity, with the intensity reflected in both the positive and negative domains. Four of the couples described an early time of feeling "lovey-dovey," "fairy tale stuff," and "in a big rush." Women speak of being "charmed" by their partners. One woman recounted that "he picked me lilacs and said he would protect me from the evils of the world." These same couples identified considerable conflict interspersed with the romance, however, with two of them describing their early days as "tumultuous" or "rocky," marked by an on-again-off-again pattern of fiery break-ups and romantic reconciliations.

One couple spoke of a different kind of beginning, focused on friendship and a reluctance to make a commitment rather than romance and rush. They attributed their ability to make the positive changes that they have made to the foundation of friendship on which the relationship was formed.

Two men and two women came to their present relationship with a history of physical abuse in a previous marriage or intimate relationship. Despite their efforts to put the past behind them, and a firm resolve that it would never happen again, old patterns resurfaced and abuse erupted in the current relationship.

Early Abuse. Looking back on their relationship provides individuals with hindsight awareness of early signs of abuse that went undetected at the time, as well as

insight regarding the power of the socialized roles and expectations that they brought with them from their families of origin. One woman articulates her understanding of the effects of the patterns that she and her partner developed in their families and assumed in their marital relationship:

> What I brought into it was the care-taking I guess -- responsibility, independence. And I think that kind of added fuel to the fire. The responsibility and care-taking, like just taking over whatever (he) lacked in, in terms of responsibility. I just assumed that care-taking role. When he would say, "You are the wife" and "You are the mother" or "You are the woman and the woman's role is da da, da da." And I'm just like, "Well, OK." ... I just took on that role. Had he been more liberal-minded about that I probably would have continued doing what I was doing which was being independent, working, all that sort of stuff.

This woman sees that she came to her marriage prepared to comply with whatever was asked of her. In her determination to make this relationship work she rationalized the inequities and worked overtime to assume responsibility for both the emotional and instrumental well-being of the family. Her fatigue and frustration were viewed by her partner as a normal part of adjustment to marriage. Violence erupted when she ceased being compliant and started demanding equal responsibility from her partner.

Both men and women experienced their early marriage as a battleground for control. Although they wanted to make this relationship different than previous ones and different than that of their parents, they lacked the necessary recipe or blueprint. One woman echoes the comments of two other female informants who entered their relationships holding tightly to their independence. Initially, they stubbornly resisted their partners' attempts to control. Over time, however, they realized that they had let go of a great deal more than they ever thought they would:

> Marriage wasn't what I thought it would be. And then gradually I think (he) started getting more and more

> control of the situation. And I just gave over more and more control. When I think back I can't believe I let it happen.

Conflicts emerged frequently in the early years and were determined to be a normal part of marital adjustment. Defenses of denial and minimization served to deflect concerns that something might be seriously wrong in the relationship. Early abuse was often described in language of mutuality such as "yelling matches" or "pushing and shoving back and forth." One woman recalled that when her boyfriend hit her early in their dating relationship she hit him right back. She did not think of the incident as abuse "and it never occurred to me that it would ever happen again."

In some cases the ongoing arguing and bickering escalated gradually, but for two women the first incident was dramatic and brought to the relationship a view of the husband that, until that point, had not been seen. One woman describes her reaction to the first episode of verbal abuse:

> I thought, "This isn't (him)." Because I hadn't really seen that side of him up until then. I knew he was outgoing.... I knew his personality. I just sort of didn't believe that he would be that angry and that mean. But he was -- and it continued.

Most women acknowledged that, over time, there was an increased tolerance for verbal abuse in the relationship. This did not prepare them for the extension of the abuse into the physical realm, however. They reported feeling "surprised" or "shocked" at the first occasion of physical abuse, remembering it as highly traumatic. One woman made immediate contact with the police to determine her rights. Another ran to a neighbour to seek refuge and tell her story. Others kept the secret of abuse contained within the marriage. None of the women accessed the Shelter system until much later in the abusive relationship.

Following the first occasion of physical abuse one young woman sought support and evaluation of her situation from friends and family. The message she heard at that time was that, "Marriage is hard. Stick it out." Her father advised her not to nag her husband after a drinking episode. She returned home determined to try harder to make things work in the relationship.

It would appear then, that early in the relationship, the focus was much more on "sameness" than on "differences." That is, the relationships were formed on the basis of the gender-appropriate structure laid out by the previous generation, with men holding the final say and women accepting their subordinate role. When differences did arise, the men felt threatened and attempted to regain control.

Organizing Around the Abuse

Despite promises that it will never happen again and a profound hope that the last time was really the last time, the abuse does happen again -- and again. Although it remains sporadic and unpredictable, couples begin to recognize recurring patterns and their lives become organized around the abuse. One woman could make the connection between episodes of abuse and her role in a particular situation:

> Every time we'd do something that I had decided that we were going to do we'd end up having a fight. If we were going out with my friends, he gets drunk and ends up being abusive one way or another. If we were going to my family's place he is sick or mad or -- always.

When she was in control, he felt vulnerable and threatened.

Another woman recalls the pervasiveness of the escalating disagreements:

> And fighting was the only communication that we were doing. If he'd say red, I'd say black and it would go from there. It didn't matter what it was, it was

> always opposites. And it was always in our faces -- in each other's faces.

And though the episodes of physical abuse remained intermittent, there was ongoing verbal abuse and the threat of almost any situation escalating to violence. One couple recalls the tyranny of the emotional and verbal battering:

> Wife: I don't remember at which points throughout the years he would actually hit me or hurt me. (But) certainly verbally, mentally, emotionally -- always.
> Husband: The threat was always there. Like I would always be right there in her face.
> Wife: Like he would tell me he would put me through the wall and what could I do about it?
> Husband: Yeah, and that threat and control was there all the time.

Explanations for the abuse. Both men and women search for a satisfactory explanation for the abuse. Making sense of the cause of the abusive behaviour becomes important in terms of separating the abuse from the abuser and dictating a particular course of action. Over time, however, these explanations come to be seen as, at best, only part of the picture, and at worst, an excuse for the abuser. Causal explanations were evident in all couples' early stories. The main explanations presented by the informants in the current investigation include an explanation focused on the wife's temperament (ie. she provokes); an explanation focused on the husband's temperament (ie. he has an anger/temper problem); an explanation focused on the husband's substance abuse (ie. drinking causes the abuse); and, in one case, an explanation focused on the husband's health (ie. he has a chemical imbalance).

Women-focused explanations place the blame on women for provoking their partners, thus, bringing the abuse upon themselves. One man admits to being continuously focused on his partner's behaviour as the cause or trigger for his abuse:

> I would come home in a great mood but there was always

> part of me thinking, you know, "What will she do that will piss me off?" Because I used to think like that.... I could find the one little negative thing out of a great day and ... Boom! -- that's it, you know.

His wife articulates her understanding of the complexity of the interpersonal dynamics associated with attribution of blame:

> People who abuse you convince you that they are not abusing you. They are only doing this because if you would only stop acting in that manner then they wouldn't have to be this way. So then ... after awhile you go, and I think especially women because we do think things over and analyze and are introspective, we go, "Okay, it's my husband's right not to allow the children to talk at supper because ..."

Differences of opinion come to be seen as unacceptable, even pathological, in this confusing relationship context.

Another woman, recognizing her role in the dynamics of the abusive episodes, speaks of her initial willingness to accept the blame:

> He would blame me for whatever and I could sort of see where I would have some influence so I would accept the blame. ... I <u>would</u> provoke him. I would know what would get him. I would know that he wanted to be left alone but I couldn't accept that. I needed more and he was unwilling to give me more so I would poke and poke and poke until he felt like he just had to get out and the only way he knew to get out was --.

As they learn to take responsibility for their behaviour men come to see the critical importance of letting go of this old way of thinking:

> It was real easy for me to say, "<u>You</u> made me do it -- you, you, you. I did all those things and that is the bottom line.

Men-focused explanations identify the problem as residing within the husband. Anger problems, substance abuse problems, or medical problems served as explanations for all five couples at one point or another as they sought to identify the cause of the abuse. Three men speak specifically of their tendency toward perfectionism and

their strong need to have things done a certain way. This perfectionism places a high demand on themselves and on others. One man agrees with his wife's description of him as "short-fused" and elaborates:

> I'm a hyper person and when things don't go my way I get mad. I get upset and I scream and roar, not only at (my wife) but at (the children) as well. Anybody, anybody out on the street.

This explanation once again invites women and other family members to understand, anticipate, and take responsibility for the abuse. As one woman remembers, angry outbursts could come at any time, with the unpredictability placing tremendous strain on the relationship:

> So living with (him) there would be periods when we would get along so well and then, wham, just for no reason the abusive behaviour would come.... There would be a verbal attack over what colour the wall was. I mean it didn't have to have a reason. Something would trigger it and it would be horrible again.

Men describe feeling dominated by feelings of anger, with limited access to any other emotions. As one man recalls:

> If something happened, I got mad.... nothing in between. ... I could never tell you what I felt except, "I'm mad as hell."

Four of the five male informants describe a history of substance abuse. All of them have significantly altered their previous pattern of consumption. One man took this step many years ago and is an active AA member with over fifteen years of sobriety. A second is also an AA member and has been abstinent for over a year. The third man has three years of sobriety, marking his last drink with his last abusive episode. The fourth informant has reduced his alcohol intake and reports that he now drinks only once in awhile and has stopped "heavy partying." The fifth male informant has not altered his pattern of occasional social drinking.

Both men and women acknowledge the influence of alcohol

in their lives over the course of the downward spiral of abuse. They describe several ways in which alcohol and drugs served to support abusive behaviour. Firstly, as one man states, one gains a sense of power and control when intoxicated:

> I always classed drinking as gaining some euphoric power or something.

Secondly, alcohol insulates individuals from others and from their own feelings of insecurity or fear. As one man highlights, they are able to "numb out" and avoid dealing with personal and interpersonal issues:

> I bottled myself up. And a lot of my drinking was because I was too scared to be myself ... I could hide away and not get too close to people.

Finally, substance abuse absolves an individual of responsibility. He cannot be held responsible for his abusive actions because he was drunk and out of control at the time and may not even remember what he did. Additionally, substance abuse requires that others take responsibility for the day-to-day activities that one is unable to perform when under the influence of alcohol or recovering from a drinking episode.

For one informant the relationship between alcohol abuse and wife abuse is described as "the opposite of most people" and as a source of confusion for the woman:

> Husband: When I drink I don't abuse. I'm happy-go-lucky.
> Wife: The violence would happen when he was sober. That's what I couldn't understand.
> Husband: When I was hung over or during sleep or something.
> Wife: Like the next morning I would try not to bug him. I would shut the door or whatever. Eventually, like after a year or two of doing that I got tired of being so nice about it. I thought ... "You have responsibilities here." ... So I stopped tiptoeing around and that would make him more mad.

Although this man did not become physically abusive when he was intoxicated, his drinking behaviour clearly served as an

excuse for irresponsibility.

Eventually, all informants come to see through the mask of alcoholism with both men and women recognizing it as an excuse for the abuser. One couple describes the change:

> Wife: And not either one of us believe that he did it because he was drunk at all. That was an excuse for a lot of years, "I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't been drinking." Bull__! He would have done it, drinking or not drinking. It is easier to do when you are drunk.
> Husband: I think it was easier to justify what had happened. (I could say), "I didn't do it."

One man now sees that alcohol helped set the stage for the escalation of verbal abuse to physical abuse:

> Alcohol just extended (the abuse) into the physical aspect of it. I could hurt people verbally, you know, and think out things to say to hurt people without alcohol too.... It threw some more gas on the fire.

Though eventually informants come to see that the relationship between substance abuse and spouse abuse is not a causal one, they emphasize that both are problems that need to be dealt with. As one man stresses, termination of the substance abuse must be the first step in the process of change:

> I could never sort anything out when I drank.... If you really want to look at yourself and really make a change you have to get rid of the chemical abuse first, the abusing of yourself.

For one informant couple, an explanation based on the husband's health problems has been central to their understanding of the abuse. They mark the diagnosis of Major Affective Disorder as a critical factor in his process of recovery that has included seventeen years in AA as well as individual, marital, and group counselling (Anger Management):

> Husband: I think I knew something else was wrong. Besides the other problems that I did have I knew something else was wrong.
> Wife: And we had gone to counselling.... We had looked at some of the emotional things. But he went to (the doctor) and found out that he has Major Affective

> Disorder.... (he) told him that he was absolutely powerless to do anything about the depressions that he had had. It was probably hereditary. (He said) that he was capable of doing anything with the proper treatment and that it was absolutely astonishing that he had done as well as he had, given what he had.

Major Affective Disorder is understood by this man as partly physical and partly mental and, thus, it is not held as a comprehensive explanation for his abusive behaviour. He acknowledges that he holds responsibility for maintaining a healthy relationship and positive lifestyle:

> Husband: (I) got on prozac and never looked back.... This is a medication that will take care of the physical part of it and that way you have a base to work from. And (you have to) make sure you take care of the mental.... Go to fairly regular counselling ... have a positive attitude and stay in positive situations.

The stories of all five informant couples reflect a common search for an answer to the question of "why" the abuse happens. During the time that they are caught in the downward spiral they seek to find the reason, the explanation that will help them to understand their situation. Although, over time, all couples come to recognize the limitations of this way of thinking, a great deal of time and energy is consumed in the search for an explanation and in the development of strategies or solutions directed by those explanations.

Strategies for coping with the abuse. All of the women acknowledge that over the course of the relationship they developed strategies for coping with their partner's abusive behaviour, including anticipating his moods, staying quiet, avoiding him, and fighting back. Making this acknowledgement was particularly difficult for one woman:

> Strategies? Oh yeah. Which is crazy when you think about it, but I did. I am fairly educated and I have a good grasp on life and I am kind of a real person but I did just like everybody else does.

Women went to great lengths to avoid conflict with their partners and, when problem situations did arise, they usually attempted to smooth things over in order to prevent an escalation. At times, however, every one of them fought to hold their ground, even though to do so could be potentially risky. This vacillation between avoiding and fighting back was a common one as illustrated by the following examples:

> Initially I started fighting back ... I said to myself, "Boy, if you want to argue, OK, alright then, I'll argue with you because I am getting sick and tired of getting yelled at." ... But I learned how to be real quiet and not argue and not set him off. Because I knew it was just going to go into another great big argument. (He) would end up winning and I would feel awful anyway. So I would just be really quiet and let him say his piece and that would end it.

Another woman describes her response to the abuse:

> When he first hit me I freaked out. But then after the second or third time, I don't know, I started saying like, "F__ you. You're not going to do this to me. And I started fighting back you know. ... I felt humiliated, degraded, and powerless. At least if I could kick or punch or hit or bite or whatever, at least I was putting my two cents in and defending myself.

One other woman also spoke of attempting, at times, to hold her own physically. In terms of verbal battle, however, it was agreed that women held the high ground and were specifically recognized as having an advantage over their husbands. As one woman describes, however, there were risks associated with this advantage:

> You use what you can. You get your licks in when you can. I learned what would cut him right down. And sometimes to my own peril. But I'd be so enraged I'd think, "Just once I am going to get you." And I would. I knew that in a verbal confrontation I could beat him.... He can't compete with me.... He couldn't get me verbally once I got going.... And I could watch him getting more and more trapped. But I also knew I ran a risk.

A second woman remembers her deliberate efforts to get back at her partner verbally and emotionally:

> The more he hurt me, the more I wanted to hurt him emotionally. So I would just give it right back to him. So that is where you end up. It might start out that one person is totally abusing the other person but it doesn't end up that way. And those are the habits that have formed over (the) years.

This woman's superior verbal skills are acknowledged and valued by her husband who depends on her to speak for him:

> I am not really good at explaining things. (She) is the explainer in the family.... She talks for me a lot of the time. I don't mind that. And if she is wrong I will just tell her that I don't feel that way, you know.

In addition to verbal skills, women call forth their skills of perceptiveness as they attempt to anticipate how their spouse will react to a particular piece of news or activity, deliberately orchestrating the events in the family to correspond to his anticipated mood. They tiptoe around and try to keep the children quiet when their father is hung over or in a bad mood. They introduce "touchy subjects" according to his anticipated receptiveness. Everything from volunteering for a church committee to the children having friends over could trigger a reaction and, thus, must be dealt with cautiously. One woman learned to delay informing her husband of her plans or activities until "after the fact" as he resented her involvement outside the home:

> That is how I would cope with him is I would go out and I would just do something. Then I would come home -- I'll take the flack after. Because I knew so often he could talk me out of things. So I would just go ahead.... I signed up for driving lessons.... That was one of those things. If I talked to him about it ahead of time he would have talked me out of it because a wife with a driver's licence -- That's an independent person. We can't have that.... So I figured that out. Don't tell him. Go out and do it.

Another woman recalls using several strategies and her feelings of ultimate futility as the abuse prevailed:

> I stayed around and put up with it for years. I had

> fought back and that got me nowhere. I had tried to anticipate ... trying to out-gun or to figure out what he was going to do next.... (I) tried to avoid, and at the end of the line that's where we were at was avoidance. We avoided (him) at all costs.

Avoidance is a critical strategy when the risk of abuse is high but it is also utilized when things are going well. One woman speaks of deliberately avoiding discussion of the abuse during the settled times in the relationship. She recalls feeling a mixture of fear that talking about it might trigger it and hope that, if ignored, the abuse might disappear:

> And in your saner moments when things are fine you don't talk about it because you don't want to rock the boat. Because what if now it's going to get better? It seems to happen for no reason, maybe it will go away the same way.

Unfortunately, however, it does not go away. Over time, the ongoing efforts of women to organize themselves and the family around the abuse consume a tremendous amount of physical and emotional energy, leaving them feeling exhausted and uncertain of their own identity.

The double life: Women's loss of identity. The ongoing abuse clearly takes its toll on women's sense of self. Four of the five female informants recall struggling to hold on to their self identity as they cope with ongoing abuse in their marital relationship. As the following quote highlights, they begin to doubt the validity of their own experiences:

> I was just reacting. I didn't know what I thought about anything. I doubted every thought that I had. I lost every feeling that I had. I was waiting for (his) response to whatever to know how to feel or how to react.

Another woman voices a similar loss of self:

> I used to wake up and look at him to see how I was going to feel that day. ... If he was in a bad mood then so was I. I just had to be in there doing the same, being the same. It was like I had to anticipate

> what I should be today and try to act -- try to double-shuffle, I guess, so I wouldn't make waves.

In the win-lose set-up of the relationship it proves too costly for women to think differently than their partners.

Despite the erosion of their identity in the home, however, women are able to present another image to the outside world, effectively leading a double life. They are split. Who they are in the workplace and community is very different than who they are when they step inside the door of their home:

> I would be (me) the go-getter, the smart, hard working, well-intentioned, receptive, perceptive person who knew what she was doing, and people could trust that in me. And then I would walk in --. The way I did things and what I did and how I did it was fine everywhere else except at home. At home it wasn't fine. It was wrong. I couldn't do anything right. Everything was wrong.... So it was very confusing.

All of the women in the current study were successfully employed outside the home in a variety of demanding positions ranging from office work, to health care provision, to management. Their success in the work world was often a source of tension in the marital relationship, particularly if they were making more money or gaining more status than their husbands. One woman was discouraged from taking university courses and frequently criticized by her husband for "thinking she was so much smarter than him."

Whereas four of the women held tightly to their workworld identity and perceived their workplace as a haven from the abuse in their marriage, one informant found it too difficult to continue living a double life, and chose to surrender that identity in order to maintain a consistent focus on maintaining peace in the relationship:

> I can't go out and be who I am and come home and change and meet all the other demands. I can't do it. I gave up and resigned myself to being at home and changing. ... It was easier for me to please (him) if I had all day to think about pleasing him.

This woman was no longer able to live a double life as it was too exhausting and she was beginning to lose her sense of competency at work:

> I couldn't deal with the duality of it all. It was getting too hard and I was getting told so often and so many times at home that I wasn't just stupid at home, I was stupid everywhere else but people were just too nice to tell me about it. You know, I guess I started to believe it after awhile, and my attitude at work started to wane.

After years of living with criticism and threats, one woman came to doubt her own views as well as those of her partner:

> There reached a point where I didn't trust him or me....I had come to the point now where I no longer believed a word that came out of his mouth.... By then I didn't trust him at all. (And you) begin to doubt yourself.... You begin to believe that what you are seeing or what you are thinking is not correct because someone is standing there telling you, in one way or another, that you are a stupid idiot.

The double life: Mens' loss of identity. The self-identity of men also suffers during the downward spiral of abuse. Two men speak of feeling like they were "actors" with little honest and genuine contact with their families or the world. Three of the five describe a double life similar to that articulated by the women. In work and social settings they were typically seen as "laid back" and "easy going" but at home they were demanding and controlling. For one man, this split was obvious, and a source of internal frustration:

> I was like two people. ... I was this one person when I put on my suit and tie. And then when I took this suit and tie off I became this other person. ... I wanted more of the person I was at work to come home with me and he never came home.... When I socialized he was there. But when I came home and was just dealing with (my wife) he wasn't, you know. The SOB abandoned me again.

Alcohol and drugs played an important role in the lives of two male informants. Intoxication served to cover feelings of inadequacy and hurt and also gave them a means of

avoiding the demands and responsibilities of family life. In addition, of course, it provided an effective excuse for aggressive and abusive behaviour which "couldn't be controlled" and often couldn't even be remembered. As they became more entrenched in the downward spiral of abuse these men turned more and more often to avoidance strategies such as drugs and alcohol.

As they look back, four of the men recalled intense feelings of shame and self-hatred as they recognized the impact of their abusive behaviour on their partner. One man speaks of feeling trapped in a vicious cycle of shame and abuse:

> I felt like I was some kind of hideous monster that could do this. I knew it was wrong. And yet, I didn't know what else to do.

Facing up to his abuse and the potential consequences of not changing his ways was, for one man, the turning point:

> I've always loved (my wife) very much and even more now and I knew I was hurting her and I didn't intend to. And I knew she loved me very much.... and I didn't want that to end. And I seen (sic) that in front of me.

Escalation of the abuse

All couples recognized a worsening of the abuse over time with an increase in the severity of physical abuse occurring within the context of an overall deterioration in the relationship. As one woman recalls:

> It kept getting worse and worse in terms of the cycle and the emotional shit that went along with it.

Another female informant emphasizes the general environment of the home, an environment of fear, as being equally as devastating as the frequency of actual abuse:

> And it is not just the frequency of the abusive incidents. It is just the whole sense of what your home becomes.... It was just an awful place to come into ... because you didn't know what would go wrong next. Even when there was no actual abuse going on it was a terrible place to be in.

Pregnancy was a particularly difficult time for two of the

five couples. One woman synthesizes some of the complex dynamics that emerged during her pregnancy:

> I became pregnant and the violence seemed to be more often. I felt more vulnerable because I was pregnant. I was issuing more pressure all the time because, "I need you. Stand up. Be a man. Be responsible. You are going to have a baby. I need your help."... And all these things I was laying on him and all the time he was getting more and more down to drinking and running away -- escaping.

Another women recalls a worsening of abuse after the birth of their children and attributes this to her husband's jealousy of her relationship with the children and to the additional stresses and demands associated with parenthood.

In all situations, whether there was ongoing significant physical abuse over years or whether there was only one instance of a physical assault, there was a shift from the abuse being experienced by the women as something they could somehow manage or cope with, to something that was felt to be intolerable. One woman declared her intolerance of the abuse when it escalated from verbal to physical:

> One of the things that made me stay with the relationship was that I could deal with the fact that (my husband) was yelling at me a lot and that he was kind of playing power -- I have to be right -- kind of things with me but I couldn't handle the physical abuse. I could not take that.

For another woman, it took much longer to come to the point of giving up her efforts to maintain control:

> Closer to the end I was absolutely appalled at (the fact that) it didn't take anything to set this off.... Like it was because I took out peas instead of carrots. It was because it snowed this morning. And like I had lost control. I realized that there wasn't anything that I did or didn't do.

Every woman was able to identify an incident that stood out in her mind as "the worst." The significant element of this experience of the worst abuse was the woman's fear. Three women recall fearing for their lives as they were choked to

the point of blacking out or as they heard their partner threaten to kill them. One woman clearly remembers her thoughts during one such episode:

> He choked me until I blacked out and I honestly thought I was close to death. It scared me so bad. I'm thinking, "Hey, don't screw around with this." And in the back of my mind, these counsellors are saying, "This will escalate until he kills you." And I've got this in my head, "Maybe this time he <u>is</u> going to kill me."

Verbal threats have the potential to instill as much fear as physical assaults as this quote from a woman who was "grabbed" and restrained by her partner vividly illustrates:

> I've never been so afraid of any human being as I was that night.... I just thought he'd kill me that night.... And he told me, "Sit still and don't you move." And I tell you I wouldn't have moved for anything in the world. That was really the most -- that was hell.

Although the stories of the couples in the current study vary greatly with respect to the severity of abuse and the period of time that the relationship was caught in the spiral of abuse, the process appears similar. In every situation fear continues to dominate the relationship and the family continues to organize around the abuse until a crisis or turning point is reached. Often, the crisis involves either a dangerously abusive episode or the woman's awareness of risk to the children. In some cases these are one and the same event. That is, as the result of a particular episode, a woman realizes that she cannot contain the abuse and that the children are either directly or indirectly being victimized. For one woman, the final abusive episode marked the first time that the children had witnessed physical abuse and also extended to physical discipline of one of the children:

> He chased me out there screaming and yelling and swearing and banging on the car. And I thought, "He didn't care that the kids were there."

Seeing that the children could no longer be shielded from witnessing or experiencing the violence convinced this woman to take action:

> When he hit (son) I thought, "God, I have to get them out! I can't raise my kids like this." ... I thought, "Do I want my son to grow up like this? (crying)... He is such a gentle boy. My God! What if he grows up like this?" And my daughter -- I thought, "Do I want to teach her that this is what to expect?

Another woman speaks of her intense desire to protect her children and her fear that they were at risk of being harmed:

> It was his turning on (my daughter). ... That was the bottom line.... He had done this to me and he had almost wiped me out. I had allowed that to happen to me. My ego, my self worth was zero. But my idea of what I expected of her was not zero and I would never have accepted zero. I would never have allowed her to be beaten down like that and she was headed that way.... It was when it finally dawned on me that she might become physically hurt, harmed, that I said, "I'm not going to take this chance."

Looking back, this woman sees the impact of the abusive environment on the children. This awareness came like a wake-up call to her:

> To that point I didn't think it affected them. They weren't going to school with bruises and cut lips.... You know, I tell you, I don't know where the hell I was for years. That abuse had been going on, not physical abuse, but the mental abuse had been going on towards the kids a long time.... I guess to that point I thought I could handle it.

As this woman emphasizes, the strain of surviving in the abusive environment is felt by all family members:

> You are taking everybody along with you. It wasn't just me that was hurting. It was (husband) that was hurting. It was my kids that were hurting.

The further deterioration of the relationship brings with it an emotional weariness, an overall sense of hopelessness and despair, a realization that efforts to avoid a situation, diffuse a situation, or recover from a situation of abuse

were no longer working. One woman vividly describes her feeling of hopelessness at the end of the downward spiral of the abusive relationship:

> It is like a fog. A blanket laying over you.... It was an actual physical assault that ended it....That was the day when I said, "That's it." But it was that awful way I'd been feeling for a very long time. That hopeless feeling, that, "I'm dying here and I'm strangling and I'm being suffocated." Maybe that's what made the difference and why that one final last attack became the last straw -- because of that awful feeling.... It is a total loss of hope.

Another woman describes her experience of reaching the turning point:

> And inside I knew that I hated this. ... I just had to get to that snapping point, I guess.

The Turning Point

It is difficult for informants to articulate what exactly happens to make the final, turning point, event different from any other. In most cases the interaction itself appears similar to many that have preceded it. That is, he abuses her, she threatens to leave, and he promises to change. One woman looks back on the scenario so familiar to her and many women she knows:

> Actually, anybody I know who has been in this situation gave the ultimatum 500 times.... We said, "I will leave if you do that again." They did it again. We didn't leave. We almost gave them permission to do it again.... to make this a turning point we can never go back on our word. And those of us who have been successful have never gone back on our word.

As her closing statement above emphasizes, this final ultimatum was different and her husband could sense the difference:

> I don't know why that one was different. I mean, you had used that threat before. But I knew this was not a threat any more. This was real.

His recognition of her firm resolve combines with his own internal sense of hopelessness and despair to break down his defenses that have prevented him from acknowledging the

problem:

> I knew it was real and ... I hated the person that I was. I could not live like that any longer.... It was killing me ... very hopeless.... And I knew I could not fix it. I admitted that.

Men and women unanimously agree that something was different this time. Some use the phrase "hitting bottom" to describe their personal experience of despair and readiness for change. For all five women, the turning point marked a shift to a more self-determined and self-protective stance. Each of them took action to terminate the relationship. For one woman, the first step was to prepare herself mentally by making plans:

> And I spent the day reading the paper, figuring out finances, ... laying plans.... He is totally remorseful and, "I'm so sorry.... We have to work on this. We have to -- we can do this." ... And I just looked at him and said, "If you're not going to tell me when you're leaving, don't talk to me."

Three of the five informant couples physically separated for a period of time ranging from three weeks to six months. Two women accessed a Shelter at this point. For one of these two women, it was the fifth time she and her children had been to the Shelter. The other woman obtained a restraining order against her husband, an action that she experienced as very empowering:

> I basically threatened him with, "Unless you stop this behaviour you are never going to see the kids again." I had gone to court.... He had no choice so, you know, I had a little bit of power there. That was good. I needed that, you know, that edge. I needed that for him to get his shit together. And he did, to a certain extent, immediately. But it was a real role reversal and he had a hard time with that. Because he had been in control and in power and telling me what to do and all of a sudden I am going, "You clean up your act or you'll never see the kids again." I had him basically by the balls and he didn't like that. That was a very uncomfortable situation for him to be in.

This crisis was experienced by men very differently than any other and they recognized at a deep level the seriousness of

their situation and the need for change. Four of the five male informants felt a profound personal despair. One man recalls his experience of "hitting bottom":

> I had to reach that point of desperation within myself. For myself I was so burned out from drinking I was almost dead.... It seemed like my whole life was falling apart at once. I reached the bottom and had nowhere to go but up.

Describing this crisis or turning point is very difficult for men. The following quote illustrates one man's struggle to find the words to express himself but his experience echoes that of the informants above:

> It's sort of a real hollow feeling there. You don't have--you don't know what you--I don't know how to describe it. It seems empty. There is nothing and you feel totally helpless and it's like you're going to drop off. Can't get worse. You don't want it to get any worse and you just say, "That's enough." I said, "That's enough" and started going the other way.

One of the men in the current investigation does not describe "hitting bottom" or reaching that point of intense personal despair and his story, thus, stands in marked contrast to the other four. This man, like the others has made significant changes in his behaviour. It would appear, however, that, for him, the turning point came in response to external conditions, that is, his wife's ultimatum, without the concomitant internal experience of despair that the other men describe. In response to the question, "What made you decide that now was the time to change your abusive behaviour?" he states:

> Basically (my wife) convinced me that I had a problem and that I should talk to somebody about it. I think she said something like, "If you want to see your children ... you better go see (the counsellor)." -- gave me the ultimatum.

Over time, this man has come to recognize his abusive behaviour and take responsibility for his actions. His ability to squarely face up to the impact of his abuse on his wife appears limited, however, restrained by his focus

on her need to change:

> I knew I shouldn't have hit her but I knew why I was hitting her ... because she would corner me and I didn't know what to do.... I mean I should have been able to control my actions and she should have taken no as no, instead of coming at me still.

This man has been involved in individual counselling, men's counselling groups, and a couple's group over the past year. He remains committed to his marital relationship and to his ongoing process of learning as he states that, "I am still changing myself. I think I always will be my whole life." Notably, he was the most reluctant to volunteer to be interviewed, expressing concern that he might not be "far enough along."

For each of the other men, however, the realization that their marriage was on the line, combined with a deep sense of personal despair enabled them to respond to the ultimatum of the woman in a different way. As one couple discusses:

> Wife: I think you (husband) knew that I meant it ... suddenly I am leaving (the marriage). I just keep thinking that obviously he knew I meant it.
> Husband: I think I knew that you meant it and I think that I was at the point where I couldn't live like that any more, anyway. I mean, it's not fun being in these shoes.... It was the first time I ever said, "Yeah, I need help and I can't do it. I don't know what to do any more." I think for me that was the biggest difference. I finally admitted to myself, never mind anybody else, but to myself, "There is something wrong with you, Bud, and you best get some help and do something about it."

Men's acceptance of responsibility and willingness to seek help and women's resolve to hold firm to their position makes it possible for the spiral of respect and recovery to begin.

It must be noted that few relationships survive beyond this point. Many men are not yet ready to face up to their abuse. And for many others it is too late. Whether or not

they are ready to change, the relationship has been damaged beyond repair.

A Spiral of Respect: Respect for Difference

The relationship takes a new direction. Men take responsibility for their actions and through their involvement in group counselling learn new ways of interacting. Abuse and the fear of abuse no longer dominate every interaction. Women take responsibility for asserting their rights and set clear limits on what they will and will not tolerate. Communication becomes more open and honest in the relationship and differences of opinion and interests are seen as acceptable rather than threatening. None of this happens quickly, however. The rebuilding of trust is gradual and both men and women remain attentive to signs of the old ways resurfacing.

Accepting Responsibility

The process of change is marked by the husbands' acknowledgement of their abusiveness and their self-directed help seeking actions. All five women believe that a critical element of the turning point was the fact that they did not orchestrate their partner's activities. As two women illustrate:

> It just seemed like when (he) went -- I really took it like his first step towards recognizing, instead of paying lip service.

> That was the first time he had ever made an effort to do something that I was never involved in. You see, I had always conducted everything he'd done. This, I wasn't. The only involvement I had was I left the brochure and that was it. If I had had anything whatsoever to do with the conducting of him going to (therapist), I don't think he would have. Or he wouldn't have made it past the first meeting or whatever until he felt that I was sufficiently appeased.

Until this critical point is reached most men have minimized the severity of their abusiveness and have repeatedly

applied defensive strategies in an effort to change the situation. Finally, they come to see the potential consequences of not changing and, as this man describes, admit the need for help:

> I knew that everything was totally in jeopardy. There were no ifs, ands, or buts in my mind. My relationship was finished if I didn't do something.... I admitted to myself, probably for one of the first times in my life, that, "I'm not in control of everything. I can't fix everything and I don't know what the hell to do about this." Like up until then I said, "Yeah, I know I have a problem but I can change. I can fix it." And that's BS. You can't. Because you don't have any tools to do it differently.

All five men began their process of change by disclosing their story to an outside individual. For three of the five men, the first contact was with a Men's Crisis Counsellor. Two of them were given information about the service by their partners who were in a Shelter at that time. The third accessed the service in response to a radio advertisement. One fellow told his story first to the pastor of his church and was referred by him to a counselling agency. The fifth man had been involved in marital and individual therapy and had made some beginning changes but identified a medical diagnosis of Major Affective Disorder as pivotal in his recovery.

All five men spoke of their fear of losing their relationship with their partner. One had great difficulty accepting his wife's decision to move out, and although he was reluctant to talk about this period of time, she recalls her feelings:

> He was very insistent that I promise him that we would get back together again. He didn't understand it when I said, "I don't know about this -- maybe in six months or a year, or two years.... We'll see." I didn't want to be hurt and by telling him "maybe" was pacifying him a little better than "absolutely no." I was still afraid of him to a certain point so I had to tell him "maybe."

Another man elaborates his views about himself and relationships and his fear of being on his own:

> I feel more secure with a partner, you know. I feel like if I was out on my own I would probably be hanging out at bars. I never would have become a (professional) and I'd never make anything of my life if I didn't have a partner. And as far as partners go, I don't think I could ever get a better one. She is a good person and she is a good mom. She knows the ways of the world and she is really smart. I just love her a lot and I didn't want that to end.

One man was able to speak to the importance of recognizing the value of changing regardless of the future of the marriage:

> I did that (group therapy) purely for myself because there was never any point that I had any assurance that our relationship would remain after I finished Anger Management. And I thought, "If it doesn't, then at least I have the tools that I can live a life that I am happier with."

Whether the initial motivation came from a fear of losing the relationship, an internal desire to change, or both, all five men came to face squarely the fact that they had been abusive of their partners. Both men and women emphasized the importance of this facing up. One woman elaborates her views:

> A couple could never stay together unless the man admits to his abuse. It took a lot of courage I think for him to do this. At the beginning I didn't think it did and now I know it takes a lot of courage to look yourself in the mirror and say, "I abused my wife. We would not be in this mess we are today if I hadn't pushed or shoved or punched or threatened or whatever. If I hadn't abused we would not be in this situation." If that statement isn't made at some point I don't think there could be change at all.

While men must take responsibility for the abuse and for changing their ways, women, too must take responsibility for themselves. This involves recognizing her rights in the relationship and holding firm to her bottom line. As one woman emphasizes, it is important to make the distinction

between accepting responsibility for the abuse and taking responsibility for oneself:

> But I have some responsibility in this. I have some say in this. It's not that anything I did that I deserved to be beat up or threatened for. I didn't deserve that ever. But I could have said "no" a long time ago and walked out.... I am responsible for saving myself.

One woman describes how difficult it is to see oneself as an active agent after years of victimization:

> There is a control issue in all of it.... When you are a victim, in fact, you are trying to control the situation by being good, by being compliant.... Although it takes a long time to figure that out I think. I think that people who are victims have a very hard time accepting that -- that they have a responsibility. That they are in charge. That they need to make decisions. And for me that feeling of being a victim was very strong. I was a victim. So to get past that and to understand my part in it took a considerable amount of time and research and faith and a lot of things.

Therapy provides the validation that is the essential cornerstone for both women and men to begin learning new ways, developing new patterns based on respect self and other.

Therapy: Separate work

As reflected above, acceptance of responsibility brings with it an awareness that there can be a different way. The critical issue of responsibility and maintaining the important distinction between accepting responsibility for the abuse and accepting responsibility for one's rights underscores the need for separate therapy for men and women. All informant couples stressed that the essential element of therapy was the focus on individual goals and changes. It was the first time in their relationship that they took a look at themselves, apart from their spouses. This woman stresses the importance of separate work:

> The main way for succeeding is that you are both working very hard on your own thing. Neither one of you is going to change the other. You can't make a person

> stop being abusive or want to stop being abusive if they don't want to stop being abusive. But you can take care of yourself. And I think that is the healthiest way to do things. And for the abuser ... he had to do it for himself. Whether I left him or not he had to stop being this way.

Women's changes. The feelings of self-doubt and vulnerability that mark the experience of women throughout the spiral of fear remain dominant during the early phase of the spiral of respect. Regaining trust in one's own perceptions takes time. A counselling or support group provides an important forum for reality checking and validation of feelings and experiences. As one woman recalls:

> ... it (group therapy) was a real healing experience for me. Because he could have bamboozled me again, very easily I think, if it wasn't for that group. He could have convinced me of a lot of things and I think in the beginning it would have been very easy for him to not really change.... If I hadn't gone I would have just ended up thinking, "Oh well, I must go along with him because he is being so good, he is learning, he is not being angry.... I must be nuts to think that he treated me badly."

As these comments so clearly show, the years of denying, minimizing, and covering the abuse leave women questioning their own experience. They evaluate their situation against those who are left with serious injuries and second-guess their own internal reactions. For this woman, hearing from an outside person that she had, indeed, been abused and that her feelings were acceptable was profoundly impactful:

> For me that is what saved my life. Somebody sat there and said, "You have a right to feel the way you feel. I was validated.... It felt good to have somebody say, "You are not nuts."

As they reflect on who they were during the spiral of abuse, women recognize that, over time, they had lost sight of their basic human rights. Two women spoke specifically of being struck by this awareness. As one woman recalls, she was taken aback by the thought of having and asserting

rights:

> I sat in a room and they played a list of the Bill of Rights. You have the right to be happy. You have the right to a peaceful existence. All of these things I thought, "Well somebody else has these rights" but never considered that I had these rights.

This woman's story reveals a life acutely tuned to the wants and needs of others.

Two of the five female informants participated in an agency-based women's group for spouses of men in the Anger Management course. A third woman maintained her active involvement in AA and also sought individual counselling. The fourth woman was a member of a women's group facilitated by a psychologist. One woman did not attend group or individual counselling. She did reading on the topic of abuse and agreed to attend counselling after her partner completed his group program should they, as a couple, feel it necessary.

As mentioned earlier, three of the five couples separated for a time. Each of them saw the time apart from their spouses as valuable, an opportunity to focus on themselves. One woman who did not leave her husband utilized the time she was involved in group counselling in a similar manner, attending to her own process of recovery:

> I didn't go to the group to save the marriage.... It had nothing to do with saving the marriage. I thought, "This is for me. This is for me to find out -- to try the best that I can, not that you can guarantee anything one hundred percent, but hopefully, guarantee that I will never be abused by anybody again." Not just in my marriage but, you know, anywhere.

All five women speak of valuing their own experience, reclaiming their rights, and coming to view themselves as worthy and deserving of respectful treatment as essential to their recovery. They describe this part of the process in terms of "limit setting," "knowing my bottom line" and, "setting boundaries." This can be a very exciting

experience for women who have felt silenced for most of their lives. One woman recalls the feeling of excitement that came with asserting herself:

> And I said, "Stop where you are right now." ... "I am willing to listen to you but not if you are going to talk to me like that. You are giving me heck. I am not going to listen to this." ... I am going, "This is really neat.... I get to do this. I can just tell somebody, 'Stop. You are not allowed to do this to me.'" ... I wasn't even thinking that I said it to make him change. I just went, "No, this isn't about you. This is about me. I don't have to sit and listen to this." He said, "I'm sorry. I was out of line." And we talked. We were able to discuss what the upset was in the first place like adults and treat each other with respect. That's really neat!

For this woman, exerting her voice in the marital relationship was new and very liberating.

Men's Changes. Clearly, women cannot make these significant changes **and remain safe in the relationship** without concomitant changes in their partners' attitudes and behaviours. Men's process of change begins with their initial acceptance of responsibility for the abuse and involves a fundamental shift in their way of thinking. As one man recalls:

> Well I really had to admit to myself that I was wrong.... I had to surrender my whole way of thinking. I had to say, "Now I'm going to start over." But I had to build some foundation -- with a little knowledge.

The stories of all five men reflect an increased awareness of the impact of their behaviour on their partners and others. One man now admits to having normalized his abusive behaviours, believing that there were no serious problems in the relationship:

> I didn't understand what was going on. I thought that was the way things were supposed to be.... I didn't realize what I was doing until -- oh, for a long time after she told me.

Two other men held a very limited definition of abuse and were surprised to learn of the impact of their words. One

of them speaks of becoming aware of his verbal abuse:

> I didn't realize how destructive words were. Until I went to Anger Management I did not realize how verbally abusive I was on a regular basis. I never even thought of it on those terms. How much can you hurt somebody by what you say to them?

As with the women, validation and group support are central therapeutic elements in men's initial treatment experience. All five male informants attended a fourteen to sixteen week Anger Management course at one of two local counselling agencies. For four of the five, their participation in this group was central to their process of change. They speak of the tremendous benefits gained from meeting others who they perceive to be "the same" and having the opportunity to look at themselves with openness and honesty in an environment of mutual trust. One male informant underscores the importance of trust:

> I know things about those guys and they know things about me that nobody else knows. Our relationship is something very special. And I think because it was the first time I really trusted somebody with what I felt.... it's kind of a mutual trust. That's the first place that we found out that, Yeah, you can tell people these things. And it's OK to feel all of this. And they aren't necessarily going to use it to hurt you.

In addition to providing a context for the development of trust, the Anger Management course challenges men to look closely at themselves. For these four men, this examination resulted in the development of both the awareness of, and ability to communicate, feelings. One man spoke at length about the value of learning to identify and express feelings in a non-threatening group environment. Prior to this, he had limited access to any feeling other than anger. He describes the change:

> I know a lot more -- am a lot more aware now of my own feelings and what is going on inside of me. I can better tend to see them for what they really are. You know, "I feel hurt" or "I feel rejected" rather than, "I'm pissed off and I don't know why." And that is the

> way I used to be.... And when I am feeling all those things does that mean that I have to get angry? No, it doesn't. It is real simple when I think about it now but it has taken me a lifetime to figure it out.

In the group, these four male informants learned strategies to deal with stressful situations. As one man emphasizes, knowing these strategies made it possible to recognize high risk situations and interrupt problematic patterns early:

> They really stressed the strategies of -- "What are you going to do when these situations arise?" And (they taught us) to think it out beforehand. Then typically you don't ever get to that point where it escalates.

All four men remember consciously utilizing the strategy of "time out" early in their recovery process to remove themselves from a potentially volatile situation. One man would take the dog walking, another would go to his workshop to cool down, the other two would go for a walk or a drive. Over time, however, three of the men found less of a need for this overt behavioral strategy. They have shifted to using the cognitive strategy of self talk in which they step back from a situation and think before acting. They typically come to perceive a situation differently, and hence, act differently. The following examples provide three men's descriptions of this strategy:

> Before I would just blow up. Now I take the time -- it only takes a second to think of it, "It's no big deal" and just keep on going. It seems to work.... I don't feel I have a lot of tension inside of me any more.... Once I tell myself that "It's no big deal" then the tension is gone.

> I think the other thing I do more is think. And it's kind of my way of taking time out. I don't say the first thing that pops into my mind. I think sometimes my tongue used to work faster than my brain.... (Now I say), "Let's slow this down, not talk right away.

> ... like, "Who cares?" I have said that to myself a lot of times. "Is it really worth it, you know, to fight over this?"

Thoughtful and intentional responses replace automatic

reactions as men take time to slow down an interaction and consider the experience of others. As these comments show, there is great sensitivity to others in a situation:

> I stop and I think, "What would my actions do? How would the family respond?" We are all in the same family circle and one person's life affects everyone.

The fifth male informant also credits his participation in the Anger Management Course as a significant component in his change process but does not identify it as central, as do the other men. For this man, the learnings from the Anger Management course comprised one step in his process which also included his involvement in AA, his self-reflective time while separated from his wife, his participation in individual and marital therapy, and antidepressant medication.

Overall, the stories of the five men in the present study reflect changes of a transformational nature. They think differently, they feel differently, and they act differently. It was difficult for most men to put into words the fundamental shift that took place but a common thread in the narratives of both men and women emphasized a shift from needing to be in control of a situation, of needing to win an argument, to allowing and respecting differences. The words of this male informant echo those of several others in this regard:

> Where I came to ... if I've got a difference of opinion it is no longer a conquest to win that argument, or to hold that resentment over -- right or wrong, I can let it go. (I can) say my piece and just let it go.

Rebuilding: Together in New Ways

As men let go of their old ways of thinking and their consuming efforts to control their partners they become generally more open minded. This creates space for a pattern of communication in which both feel safe in identifying potentially problematic interactions, expressing feelings, asking for what they need, and voicing a point of

view without fear of triggering a win-lose altercation. As one female informant states, this has been valuable for both her and her partner:

> I think the most important thing out of all of this is that we have learned, both him and I, have learned to recognize the patterns we fall into, and even to stop some of them. To be able to identify them, "OK, just a second here. What's going on?" And to be able to analyze what is going on between him and I or to take a step back and ask, "What does that mean?" But most importantly is to communicate if I need something. I can say, "I need this." You know there are big changes.

Couples unanimously agree that it is the willingness of both partners to work through situations non-defensively that makes possible genuine interactions in which men feel safe to begin expressing their feelings of vulnerability and women feel safe to take a stand. One man, who speaks of a lifetime of experience in denying feelings other than anger, has found it difficult to open up:

> One of the things that has caused me the most problems is that I don't talk about my feelings.... It was easier to shove it (a feeling) down and not discuss it with anybody for what it really was.... And I think that is probably going to take me the longest to overcome that.... I guess that is where I see I have much growing to do.

The women notice the change and, although there is initial scepticism, the change is welcomed. The words of this woman shows her appreciation of her partner's efforts as well as respect for his individual pace of change:

> And so that has been the big thing is that he has started talking about his feelings, you know, -- whatever is going on for him. He might not do it as openly or as readily as I would like him to do it but he does it.... And that has been a really gradual change. It has taken a long time.

There no longer has to be a winner declared in every interaction and women take the opportunity to broach touchy issues that would have been taboo in the past. As these two woman state:

> We talk through the issues. We talk through a lot of things that we wouldn't have ever been able to talk through before. That's the difference. I can say things now. It's not perfect. We still have arguments and disagreements but I can say things to him without fear.... Because if I ever tried that stuff before -- Well, for years I learned not to bother.

Fear gradually gives way to respect and trust as difficult situations are met successfully. Every couple spoke of coming to a point where they felt a consolidation of the changes. Although one pair referred generally to their "improved communication" as the marker of their new direction, the other four could identify a specific incident or event that was, for them, a critical demonstration of the viability of their new ways. One couple was able to plan and carry out an overseas trip, the first time the husband had accompanied his wife on a visit to her family. Another woman detailed a story in which the husband had sailed through a major job-related crisis. A third couple recalled the man's ability to smoothly manage a major conflict in his extended family. The fourth woman remembers a disagreement with a difference:

> I remember we were disagreeing ... and that was as far as it went. And I just thought, "Wow!" Because one of the things that used to happen is that when we would disagree it would always end up in a shouting match and you get this sort of tense feeling in yourself and you're thinking, "Oh God, where is this going to go?" And I thought to myself, "This is great!" ... It didn't go out of control. He just decided to have his view and let me have mine. And that was the end of it.

During the spiral of respect couples develop new ways of responding to each other and to stressful situations. As stated above, initial changes are met with scepticism and a wariness regarding the long-term picture:

> No, I never would have thought he could change. And for months afterwards, I thought, "You will go to this course and you won't change." Because what I saw in the beginning was, "I don't get angry any more" and that was it. And I guess he had to do that in the beginning.

> And I thought, "That's fine, but you <u>are</u> going to get angry one day and then we better all watch out.

All couples speak of initially "walking on eggshells" and "waiting for the bottom to fall out" as they work to build discrete day-to-day experiences into a new lifestyle marked by mutual respect. One woman remembers holding doubts about her husband's participation in treatment and how those doubts gradually gave way to trust:

> In the beginning ... I thought, "I bet they don't even talk about it (the abuse). I bet they talk hockey and baseball. Well I am learning more as it goes along that they actually meet for the same reasons that I meet with my friends -- to not forget, to remember... a place where you can go ... and they know exactly what you are talking about.

The passage of time and successful mastery of particularly stressful situations facilitates the rebuilding of trust and helps to heighten the awareness of the many smaller accomplishments that had gone unnoticed. Early in the spiral of respect couples must attend to every interaction as they attempt to operationalize what they have learned in their groups. They learn to recognize potentially problematic patterns and interrupt them before they escalate. Over time, however, the changes become incorporated into their daily life and they "do not have to stop and think about doing things differently." Things just <u>are</u> different. The changes are consolidated and the spirals widen. One man emphasizes this movement toward wider spirals:

> (At first) I kept such a tight reign on myself, you know. I was deathly afraid of being angry about anything because I did not know whether I could just be angry. And yes I can.... I can deal with that situation on a small level rather than it escalating to something that is way out of proportion.

From time to time events arise that stress the system such as holidays or spending time with extended family where, once again, couples must deliberately work to avoid falling

back into their old ways. One woman remembers her anxiety during the holiday season:

> We had a really scary moment ... when my family showed up for holidays. ... and then all the influence from the past.... (People) who haven't seen this transformation that has occurred. Christmas is tough. Christmas is scary because for years ... Christmases have been nightmares. (But this year) was probably the nicest Christmas I have ever had.

Both men and women remain vigilant to the signs of a drift back into "the old ways" and express with a unanimous voice a commitment to maintaining their current positive direction. One man stated that he would notice "mood swings" if things were slipping. Another commented that a resurfacing of his tendency to "shut down" communication with his partner would be a signal of relapsing into old patterns. Men and women agreed, however, that it would likely be the women who would first notice the signs of problems developing. One woman speculates as to the reasons for her close monitoring in the relationship:

> I feel like I monitor things and I watch things. Probably because I feel like I have the most to lose.... I feel he can let things slide really easily because it is harder for him to look at things. It is not so much his nature to be introspective and dissect things.

In their efforts to avoid drifting into old ways women strive to maintain a clear sense of their limits or boundaries. One woman stresses the importance of letting her partner know, unequivocally what this "bottom line" is:

> My absolute bottom line is if (he) ever looks physically threatening, ever again -- he doesn't have to hit me. All he has to do is go like this -- this familiar gesture of clenching his fist and tapping it on his chair -- and that is it. I'm gone. History. He knows that.

Although they acknowledge the significant gains they have made, informants present no illusions with respect to the possibility of abuse in the future. As one woman states:

> I'm not so naive to think that it could never happen again. I believe that the potential always exists. I believe that it exists with anyone to become abusive. My responsibility in our relationship is that I don't let things slide.

Another woman conveys a commitment to exploring the possibilities of change and an acceptance that the future of the relationship is not certain:

> Being in group and having that support has made me feel like it is OK. And I am going to do this until I am satisfied.... If we get to the end of this (group) and two years down the line we both sit across the table from each other and go, "It's not working" ... at least we saw it through. And that's OK.... But I have to make that decision on my own without having somebody else -- without my family or society in general saying, "Leave him."

Two women in the study spoke of feeling angry and defiant when they were told that they must leave their partners. One of them immediately dropped out of group when the leader presented this directive.

As stated above, women tend to see the problematic patterns developing earlier than their partners and, thus, assume the role of primary monitor in the relationship. Men come to value their wife's perceptiveness as helpful rather than as threatening as they did during the spiral of abuse. One man is particularly impressed by his wife's perceptiveness:

> I mean she can tell if things are -- if I'm on a downer or if I'm stressed or something before I even know it. It is almost uncanny.

Men acknowledge the need to remain focused on maintaining the positive changes and admit that this is often a difficult task. This man emphasizes the need for ongoing attention to personal and relationship goals:

> I think we both know now how much work there still is to do. I know that for me it is something I have to work at every day. It is very easy to close myself up again and not express the way I feel, you know, honestly.

This ongoing work requires that both parties remain open to examination of difficult, formerly treacherous, issues without defensiveness. For six of the ten informants, long term group support serves to help them stay on track and maintain an external reality check and they continue to meet regularly with a group. Two have kept in touch with their original agency-based group and four are involved in AA or Alanon. For these individuals, contact with a group keeps them aware of how far they have come. As one man states:

> It is a nice safe place that we can talk about things that you can't talk about anywhere else. It is safe there but it is (also)... a continuous reminder of where we came from. Because no matter how far away from that fourteen weeks I get there still is only one reason why I know those people. And that never changes. You know, I don't want to dwell on what happened. That was then, and the rest of my life is now. But I don't want to go back there. I am not going back there.

Over time couples gradually rebuild the trust that was destroyed during the spiral of abuse. This involves not only increased trust in their partner but also trust in themselves, in their perceptions and experiences, and in the possibility of working things through without a situation escalating to abuse. As the following quote illustrates, it is not a blind trust in the other person but, rather a trust in the process:

> Because trust is still an issue.... When it rears its head we talk through it, however horrible that talk may be, we talk it through.... Now he will communicate his fears and feelings and what he is thinking. I think we are more honest and able to communicate good or bad without the defiance.

One man speaks of his intense frustration with, and evolving understanding of, the slow process of regaining his wife's trust. He recalls discussing his feelings with her:

> I said, "When do I get the benefit of the doubt when I get mad or upset about something. That that's all it is. I'm mad and upset about it. Nothing more is going to happen to you.... do I have to be painted with that same old brush?" (And she said), "This is the way it

> used to go, or escalate, from here." And so there is that fear there. It might be forever, I guess. That is something I have to deal with ... where her comfort level is.... Selfishly I wish I was never painted with that brush again. It would be nice to be able to say that (on that day) I changed from being that person to this new person. It isn't going to be like that any more. But it doesn't work that way.

Along with the frustration regarding what hasn't yet been achieved is a keen awareness of what <u>has</u> been gained and an appreciation of the new relationship that is developing. One woman conveys her strong feelings for her partner:

> I'm so grateful that we have reached this in time. I enjoy his company so much and I love the man so much. (Before) I wouldn't have said that. I loved him but I hated him. I didn't like who he was.

The endurance of the relationship, thus, requires intense personal examination on the part of both partners as they alter deep-seated beliefs about men, women, control, rights, and the structure of relationships. The knowledge they gain through reading and participating in group therapy facilitates the development of a new relationship with different expectations and an altered vision for the future. There is unanimous agreement that things are much better than they ever were, and that the next generation will benefit from the changes they are making.

<u>Ongoing Development</u>

<u>A new relationship</u>. As the spirals of change continue to widen, a new relationship develops -- a relationship dominated by respect, appreciation of individual differences, and a shared vision for the future. Couples are able to plan, to have fun, to dream together, in a way that they could not in the past. As one woman states:

> We are planning. It might only be that we are planning on going swimming on Sunday, but that's something. (Before) we never had the luxury of anything actually going through. It was always volatile.

Life becomes more predictable and couples are able to look

down the road, establishing individual, couple, and family goals. This is new and exciting for both men and women. The words of this woman convey her positive feelings about the changes:

> We do a lot of things together but what has helped us more than anything is that we are able to do things apart as well. That's really different, really different.

There is freedom to pursue individual interests and activities and support for individual achievements. Women who previously would have restricted their activities or kept them secret from their partner now openly pursue their interests. As one woman emphasizes, fear is no longer a factor influencing her decision-making:

> I'm not worried about how (he) is going to react any more. Like, if he doesn't like it then he doesn't like it. OK. He doesn't have to like it.... I go to the theatre. I love the theatre. I go to the library regularly.... I do things with the kids now.

Four of the five men also speak of enjoying greater freedom and peace of mind as they let go of their need to control. They see the benefits of their changes extending far beyond the behavioral consequences of responding differently to situations and are aware of a change in their overall view of life. As one man states:

> My attitude, even towards myself has changed immensely and my attitude toward others has changed correspondently. Self-esteem has gone up a lot. My work productivity has gone up. Both my mental and physical health have improved quite a bit.... I appreciate things more. You know, I enjoy things more than I used to.... There is more of a tendency to look at practically everything as an opportunity rather than looking at things as minor irritations or minor setbacks.

Without exception the informant couples describe their current relationship as better than it ever has been, strengthened by their mutual efforts to end the abuse. They view each other as allies in the process. All five couples

made reference to their partners as "friends." One man shows his newly-developed appreciation for his wife:

> I've discovered that I've lived in this house with this very neat person. Somebody that cares about me very much. And that she isn't out to get me.... I don't feel that any more. I feel like a have a real friend.

A new family life. All informant couples have made significant movement toward greater equality in the relationship creating a new family structure with both partners involved in decision-making, parenting, and domestic activities. Men are more active in the relationship and in the family, moving from a position of peripheral involvement to take on a central role. As one woman explains:

> We are involved in one another's life. He is involved in a way that he wasn't. He used to go to work and come home, go to work, come home.... He's here more. Like he's involved in keeping the house and does the dishes and he helps. He is involved in things.

All of the men express the view that household chores and decision-making should be shared. They speak of letting go of the "old fashioned" and "sexist" views that they previously held, views that led to them wanting to control all family finances, to them resenting their partners' work outside the home, to them dismissing housework as her work.

> And that is part of the equality. It's a sharing in the things you do.... Nobody has defined jobs particularly.

Whereas four of the five men speak of their increased participation as a positive and liberating change, one man feels that the changes have left him with less freedom. He expresses some regrets about the changes he has made:

> Because one of the changes she wanted me to do was to be with the children more and to do more things around the house with her or, you know, play with the kids every day or feed them every day or whatever or make the beds, vacuum, or whatever, things like that. She wants a fifty-fifty relationship. So she's got that now. Now I don't have time to do anything for myself.

> I just have time to do those things. But it should get better when the kids get older.

The men unanimously express a strong dedication to parenting and desire to build a healthy relationship with their children as well as provide a positive role model for them. This is a great challenge for those who did not have a model of respectful interaction in their family of origin.

Strong feelings of guilt and shame were expressed by three men who acknowledge the impact of their abusiveness on the children and express hope for the future:

> The years of fighting have left an effect and they are going through counselling.... (I need to) work on my parenting skills.

> I hope that as she gets older she won't hate me because I was such a SOB when she was growing up.

> So I think (my son) understands a lot of it. And I think he also knows that it is not a way to deal with things. I hope that if he's gotten any message from me it's that the way I was doing things was not good. By example he is seeing something else.

Men see the importance of remaining open-minded and respectful in their interactions with their children and place a high priority on making improvements in this area. All four men in the current study who were involved in active parenting expressed a desire to improve their relationships with their children:

> More listening, better listening. I was so apt to jump in on a situation without hearing what it was all about.

During the spiral of fear these men were frequently on the periphery of family life. One woman explains how she deliberately placed her husband on the outside and how that has changed:

> Before, I took (my daughter's) position and I put (my husband) in the position of being the outsider. In my effort to protect. And sometimes it was just fine because he was being overly harsh and verbally abusive. And sometimes if I could have stepped back and looked

> at the situation ... At one point in time I felt I couldn't do that. But now I feel like I can.... We just seem to talk things over now.

Differences of opinion in the area of parenting are no longer threatening.

One man felt particularly alienated from his family and remembers feeling like his wife and children were ganged up against him:

> And it used to be a source of frustration to me, knowing that the kids always went to their mother. It was part of the power struggle that I had going on within myself.

He felt lonely and isolated, yet declined their invitations to join in family activities. These days, however, he is actively involved in all aspects of parenting. He no longer resents the relationship the children have with their mother and is focused on improving his relationship with them. His wife comments on the changes she has noticed:

> They don't seem to be afraid to go to (him) for things. They go to him way more than they ever used to. They still come to me a lot but they don't necessarily prefer me any more.... The big change too is that they see us as a family. We spent years doing things without him.... (Now) he goes to everything and they love it.... they comment, "It sure is fun when Dad comes places with us." They like family things.

Beyond the relationship. The impact of the changes that have transformed the marital relationships of the informants from fear-dominated to respect-dominated reverberates to other relationships and other contexts. Men and women recognize that they are "using the tools" that they have learned in settings outside of their relationship.

The two couples with school-age children speak of making deliberate efforts to pass on the tools that they have learned to their children. One father emphasizes the importance of teaching children non-abusive ways of resolving conflicts:

I've got to show them. And sit down with them and tell

> them that it (abuse) is not accepted. If you have something to say, sit and talk.

The second couple with young children also refers to "breaking the cycle" of intergenerational abuse. As the mother states, part of their message to the children involves encouraging them to stand up for their rights:

> We teach our children all of this now. (We tell them), "Nobody has the right to treat you in a way that makes you feel bad."

Men and women begin to respond differently outside of the family setting as well. Difficult situations are handled differently by both men and women. This women observes some of the changes that she and her husband have made in their wider circle of contacts:

> We have both taken what we have learned outside of our relationship ... to our world around us ... to our work places. I have learned to be able to go to work and say, "No, you don't get to do that" or be able to walk away when ... peers are inappropriate. He has learned to handle problems at work without erupting -- or with friends.

For two couples the changes that they have made have necessitated a change in their entire social network. One man avoids all contact with his old drinking crowd. In the second case, the couple was ostracized by their friends when the husband's abuse was made public. As the husband recounts:

> A lot of our friends didn't want anything to do with us any more.... When (my wife and I) got back together we weren't accepted. I think because a lot of them -- well everyone has abuse in their relationships -- and they are afraid of this, I guess. They realized that we were getting help.

The informants' participation in group counselling brings them into contact with a broad range of people who are willing to admit to the existence of abuse in their relationship. On hearing the stories of these individuals and closely examining their own backgrounds these men and women develop a heightened sensitivity to abuse in the

relationships of their social network and in the wider community. Several couples speak of noticing verbal abuse where they hadn't noticed it before and of wondering about the extent of abuse in some relationships. As one man states:

> I wonder what happens when they (friends) get in an argument? ... you never know what goes on behind closed doors. Because we were socializing and carrying on at a time when we were having real problems.

One woman made the decision to take action when she overheard a neighbour abusing his wife. This is something she wouldn't have done in the past and the incident provided an important opportunity for her and her husband to explore their changing attitudes:

> We could see the guy abusing the girl out in the back yard. And I went immediately to the phone and phoned the police. And (husband) became very angry and defensive, (saying), "It is not our problem." (And I said), "Yes, it is our problem." And the more we talked about it, the more he came around to, "Yeah, it is -- it is all of our problem. We can't turn our back on this shit any more. We have to look it square in the face." I wish somebody had looked it square in the face when it was happening in our house.... the attitude has got to change.

The willingness of these ten informants to "look it square in the face" was truly remarkable. Although they unanimously acknowledged that it was difficult to talk about the abuse in their relationship, every one of them expressed a desire to help and a sincere hope that their story might enable someone to break free of the cyclone of fear.

Summary

The theoretical model that evolved from the present investigation provides one way of viewing and understanding the experience of couples who have a history of wife abuse. The model attempts to describe the development of the abusive patterns as well as elaborate the process involved

in altering those patterns.

The patterns begin early, as girls and boys are socialized in a culture that prescribes particular sex roles. Boys are "trained" to be tough and in control, to mask feelings of vulnerability, and to fight to uphold a point of view. Girls learn to be good, responsible, caretakers, dedicated to making relationships work. These lessons from childhood are carried forward into intimate relationships. When faced with "losing control" in the relationship men increase their controlling efforts. Women also work to gain control of the situation and develop strategies for maintaining harmony. Thus, the spiral, or "cyclone," begins its forceful circling. One couple recalls the repetitive pattern:

> Wife: You just keep going around and around and around and around. It got to the point where in some fights we could just say, "You are going to say this. I am going to say this. You are going to get mad. I'm going to get hurt, or whatever." We could recite the fight.
> Husband: Because it was the same stuff over and over.

And though they both hate it, neither is able to make it stop. Finally, a turning point is reached. The woman comes to the point of saying, "No more!" and presents her partner with an ultimatum. He realizes that he must change or the relationship is over. He takes responsibility for his abuse, lets down his defenses, and seeks help. Concomitantly, the woman begins her process of recovery by acknowledging and asserting her rights in the relationship. Individuals take time to focus on themselves and their own issues as well as on establishing new patterns of communication in the relationship. One man's comments speaks to this individual/relationship overlap:

> I guess you've got to stop and take a look at yourself and just yourself. Be honest with yourself. And, if the relationship is what you really want in your heart, you've got to be willing to do any work. And it does take work to turn it around.

As women feel safe to express their views and men feel safe to show their vulnerability a new relationship develops. The fundamental basis of this relationship is respect -- respect for oneself, respect for one's partner, and respect for the healing process.

Both women and men fear that things could drift back into the old ways and remain vigilant to signs of trouble. The process of change is not always smooth, but, over time, it becomes less necessary to watch so closely and couples gain confidence in the stability of the relationship. One woman, looking back over the transcript of her interview six months previous, comments on the changes that have taken place in the interim:

> We don't walk around on eggshells so much any more. I found myself around that time (interview #1) going through a lot of standing firm on issues that weren't necessarily issues that you need to stand firm on. I was afraid that, "If I give in on this then everything is going to start to cascade down." ... And I guess that is how it goes. After being the victim for so long (you think), "I can't believe they are going to listen to me."

The changes in the relationship reverberate to other settings. Women and men begin to respond differently to their children, to the people they work with, to the community at large. Men find that they are able to use the tools they have learned to negotiate problems in new ways. Women find that they can stand up for themselves and assert their rights. Both men and women are more sensitive to abuse in the community and express a desire to contribute to helping others.

CHAPTER FIVE

Integration, Limitations, and Implications of the Results

The current investigation sought to gain understanding of the process that occurs for men and women when men who have been violent toward their partners successfully change. The powerful narratives of these couples illuminate a complex, paradox-laden journey of love and hate, conflict and reconciliation, despair and hope.

It is recognized both in the literature and by the informants themselves that very few couples remain together and successfully establish a respectful relationship after a prolonged period of wife abuse. And, although none of the informants claim to be "there" yet in terms of absolute certainty that there could never again be abuse, the changes they have made are remarkable. Their stories are stories of hope for those who are caught in the vicious cycle of abuse and those who wish to help them.

The purpose of this final chapter is to look again at the findings, examine the conceptual model in relation to the current literature in the area, and elaborate the researcher's discoveries and interpretations. Possible limitations of the study are highlighted before several implications for further research and clinical practice are presented.

Integration of the Findings With Current Literature

The data that arise from individual's reflections on and descriptions of significant experiences and changes in their lives are, obviously complex. The complexity stands as its strength, however, providing richness and depth. In addition, it demands that many levels of analysis be considered and cautions against adopting a narrow perspective. Perhaps nowhere is this more clear than in the definition of abuse.

Definition. As stated in Chapter 2, the lack of a

clear definition of abuse is identified as one of the major methodological problems hampering research in the area. Empiricists continue to bemoan the lack of a uniform, measurable definition of abuse (Geffner et al., 1988) while clinicians and researchers working within the naturalistic paradigm emphasize the difficulties associated with delineating a narrow description (Yllo, 1988). When definitions do include psychological, sexual, and economic abuse, and consider such issues as intent or motivation, they obviously lose their ability to discriminate the "clinical" group from the population at large. It is clear, however, that for the informants in the present investigation, abuse is experienced as more than a push or a shove. They provide the following definitions:

(Female): A lack of respect for another's choices and needs.

(Female): Not being free to make your own choices. Being forced to do something against your wishes or values.

(Male): To force your will upon others against their will.

Abuse is, thus, not defined as a particular set of behaviours. Neither is it described as static. Informants agree that their sense of what is abusive has changed as they have changed, influenced by personal insights and increased self awareness. The following quote shows that, for one woman, letting go of her defenses of denial and minimization and recognizing her right to respectful treatment required a broadening of her definition of abuse:

> I used to think abuse was somebody being hit with a frying pan or shot or something like that. (Now) I think probably the cruellest type of abuse is mental. Making somebody feel that they are less than what they are. Whether that is done through telling them that they are fat, or no-good-for-nothing, or stupid. I think that is probably the worst, most cruel form of abuse that there is. And the most destructive.

The difficulties associated with definition highlight an important distinction between research efforts aimed at quantifying the extent of abusive behaviour and those that seek to understand the qualitative experience of abuse. Although epidemiological information is critical to determine the prevalence of abuse, in order to be of clinical relevance, the complexity of the problem must be acknowledged.

Polarized perspectives vs. a both-and perspective.

Significant controversy exists in the study of wife abuse. The main division, as Yllo (1988) points out, is between "those who bring feminist perspectives to the problem of battering and those who do not" (p. 28). Feminists view the problem of wife abuse in the context of its historical, social, and political roots (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo & Bograd, 1988). The structure and ideology of patriarchy are seen as central to the perpetuation of violence against women by their intimate partners. Mainstream psychological, sociological, and systemic researchers work from a different set of premises. The psychological perspective focuses attention on determining the particular personality characteristics or deficiencies that best describe the batterer and the victim (Hamberger & Hastings, 1991; Walker, 1984). From the sociological perspective, abuse is viewed as a human problem, and is examined from a gender-neutral stance (McNeely & Mann, 1990). The systemic approach explores the interactional dynamics that serve to create and perpetuate violence, and sees the abuse as serving a function in the relationship (Cook & Frantz-Cook, 1984; Hoffman, 1981; Weitzman & Dreen, 1982). All of these perspectives are strongly criticized for ignoring the question of power and the socially structured patterns of relations between men and women (Bograd, 1988; Yllo, 1988).

In the last decade, however, feminist scholarship has influenced research and practice in the field of family violence and there is growing sensitivity to the dangers of studying the problem in isolation from its context. Several researchers have acknowledged the need for a "multi-level" examination of the problem of wife abuse (Ammerman & Hersen, 1990; Geffner et al., 1988; Pagelow, 1992; Yllo, 1988). Unfortunately, few have taken on the challenge in a systematic manner.

Goldner and her colleagues at the Ackerman Institute (1990, 1992) have undertaken to develop a way of working with and thinking about the problem of wife battering that encompasses many perspectives. Their "metaperspectivist stance" allows for examination of the problem from a number of seemingly contradictory viewpoints including those considered feminist, systemic, and psychological, without falling into an either/or polarity. Goldner argues that, "the both/and metaphor continues to be an island of clarity ... in this increasingly turbulent and polarized time in our field ... a real and serious alternative to the competing truths it stands between" (1992, p. 56). The both/and metaphor also aptly describes the complex, often paradoxical, experiences of the informant couples in the present study. The remainder of the discussion will utilize this both/and framework to compare and contrast current literature with various elements of the conceptual model derived from the present investigation.

Family of origin. There is strong support in the literature for the view that men who batter were raised in families where they either witnessed or experienced violence (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Straus & Gelles, 1986). Similarly, it is asserted that women who are beaten, likely watched their mothers being abused (Straus & Gelles, 1986). In contrast to this, however, none of the informants in the

present study witnessed physical abuse of their mothers. Yet all of them trace the roots of their violence back to their families, to the context where they observed men in a position of power and entitlement and women in a secondary, subjugative role. As we know, the family of origin instills values and beliefs that influence individuals to behave in ways that go far beyond that which is directly observed. As one male informant stated, "I was like my dad but I took it a lot farther." These men emphasize that their fathers would not have described themselves as abusive and would not condone physical abuse of women. And, with one exception, the parents of the informants have remained shielded from the knowledge of their abuse in the relationships of their offspring. One man cried with shame at the thought of his parents finding out what he had done to his wife.

Witnessing or experiencing abuse in the family of origin remains a significant variable in determining risk markers for abuse. This study supports Smith's (1990) view that, in addition to assessing observed or actual violence, consideration must be given to the impact of rigid patriarchal attitudes in the family of origin.

The Women's Stories

The narratives of the women in this investigation reflect a paradoxical adherence to and defiance of traditional gender injunctions. Reflected in every woman's story are themes of caring, connecting, and taking responsibility for relationships. Three of the women grew up in families where the mothers were oppressed and undervalued and the father's word was the uncontested final word. These three women specifically recall their fathers forbidding their mothers from seeking work outside the home. Unlike their mothers, the women in the present study defied the injunction stating that women must not excel outside the home. All of them were successfully employed and

progressing in their field, either through job promotion or by advancing their level of training. Two women spoke specifically of the threat that this posed to their partners, however, and about receiving "flack" for their accomplishments. A third women felt undermined by her husband's criticisms of her work capabilities and finally resigned from her job. With this exception, these women held tightly to their work world identity as a source of personal validation. This finding supports those of Hornung et al. (1981) and Yllo (1983, 1984) who found a relationship between wife abuse and the woman's increased status in the marital relationship.

Related to this is the observation that, unlike their mothers, these women "talked back" to their husbands and fought to hold their ground in an argument. This reflects the changing role of women in society, the defiance of these particular women, and the backlash that can occur as a consequence of upsetting the complementary structure of the relationship. In addition, it lends support to the findings indicating that in wife-abusive relationships, women may possess superior verbal skills relative to their husbands (Dutton & Strachan, 1987). Men's limited skills of verbal assertiveness in interpersonal problem-solving has been identified as a source of frustration and a trigger for violent episodes (Maiuro et al., 1986). The women in the present study are, without exception, bright and articulate. In conjoint interviews they were typically first to respond to questions and often served as spokesperson for the couple. In one-to-one interviews they describe themselves as bright, competent, and independent.

Looking back on the time when they were being abused, however, these women recall feeling afraid, uncertain, confused, and dependent. Although some of the characteristics described by Walker (1979) in her theory of

learned helplessness could have been applied to all of the women at some time or another during the course of their victimization, overall, the theory does not fit. Even during the worst of times, these women were not helpless. They continued to work, to care for children, to strategize ways of surviving. Clearly, they may have felt compromised in these areas as a result of the abuse but despite feeling "caught" in the cyclone of abuse, they managed to hold themselves and the family together.

The critical role of children in women's decision to leave the abusive relationship has been delineated by Hilton (1992) and is supported in the current findings. When women come to recognize the immediate danger or long-term risks to their children they take action to protect them from further abuse. In some cases, a particularly violent episode that was witnessed by or directed toward a child served as a "wake-up call," motivating women to leave the relationship.

The Men's Stories

The stories of men also reflect the powerful influence of gender socialization. Men learn at a very young age that to be a good man requires hiding "unmasculine" feelings of sadness or fear. Anger is viewed as the acceptable masculine emotion. The Male Emotional Funnel System as outlined by Gondolf (1985) accurately describes the affective responses of the men in this group prior to their decision to change. That is, any kind of negative or uncomfortable emotional state would typically be experienced and expressed as anger, and could serve as a potential trigger for verbal or emotional abuse.

Like Gondolf and Hanneken's (1987) "reformed batterers," the men in the present study described themselves as failing to meet their father's approval and falling short in terms of their own ideas of masculinity. They utilized defenses of denial and minimization to mask

feelings of vulnerability and bolster their sense of masculine identity. Paradoxically, although their abuse served as a powerful controlling mechanism in the relationship, their personal experience was one of feeling out of control -- unable to control their feelings and unable to control their partner's behaviour. They fought their out-of-control feelings with more controlling and abusive behaviours and, thus, the vicious cycle or cyclone was perpetuated.

Gender Injunctions and the Fear of Difference

The over-riding BSPP of **Fear of Difference** that dominates the intrapsychic and interpersonal conflicts of relationships in which women are abused appears to be inextricably connected to the gender injunctions received in the family of origin and supported by society at large. The socially constructed and culturally maintained messages about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman lie at the core of identity formation and are, thus, central to the understanding of relationships in which men abuse their wives.

For men, the fear of difference relates to feelings associated with trying and failing to live up to society's standards of masculinity. These standards measure a man's worth in terms of his accomplishments, successes, and ability to maintain instrumental and emotional control. Feelings of sadness, fear, or vulnerability of any kind run counter to this and are experienced as unacceptable. The fear of acting against the specific gender injunctions of masculinity leads these men to fight for control of themselves and the situation. In the marital relationship this fear of difference arises when women's actions threaten the traditional structure, such as achievement of success at work or voicing a discrepant point of view.

The primary injunction handed down to women is one

directing them to act in service of their relationships with others. Early in life they develop skills of caring and interpersonal sensitivity and, even in the face of abuse, they can show empathy for their partners. The following quote highlights one woman's insight into her husband's vulnerability and a respect for his humanity:

> I'm protective of (him). I mean I even was at the worst of times -- I was protective of him. And that is a bizarre thing ... I felt so bad for him which is stupid. I mean that is how you end up in this situation ... I just figured once somebody found out -- if they know he has been abusive, that is all they'll see. They won't see beyond that.

These women show a strong commitment to the relationship and a lifelong pattern of putting the needs of others ahead of their own. The picture appears similar to that presented by Goldner et al. (1990) who describe the dilemma experienced by women in violent relationships. To leave the relationship would mean acting against the injunction that "women must make relationships work."

These couples manage to change the direction of their lives, however, and view the change process as ongoing, even lifelong. They have learned a **Respect for Difference** that extends to all aspects of their lives. The men work to break free of the restrictive gender premises that have guided their lives for so long. This involves becoming aware of and expressing feelings of vulnerability as well as developing sensitivity to their partner's subjective experience. They are learning to accept internal feelings that are different than the traditionally masculine feelings and are able to accept their partner's differences as well. Women's tasks include learning to value their own experience and exercising their rights to an equal voice in the relationship. In the new relationship there is room for differing points of view and a wider range of responses.

Limitations

The informants in the present study represent a cross-section of couples who have had considerable contact with the police, battered women's shelter system, and social services agencies. Although, with such a small sample, any interpretations must be cautious, the commonalities among the group were more notable than were the differences. That is, despite great variability in terms of the extent of abuse and the length of time the abuse went on, all of the couples went through a time of organizing around the abuse, strategizing, recognizing an escalation, and, finally, reaching a turning point. Although this study could be criticized for combining data from "shelter" and "non-shelter" sources, the emergence of a common process is noteworthy. Possible distinctions between these two groups could be addressed in future comparison studies.

The issue of under-reporting of abuse is also a concern for researchers in this area and one that was considered in the present investigation. Given the well-recognized tendency of abusive men and their partners to deny or minimize problems, the possibility of "gaps" or "distortions" in the data must be considered as a potential limitation. Attempts were made to minimize this risk, however, by including both men and women and interviewing them separately, and by maintaining intermittent and prolonged contact with the informants.

Although the couples represented in the current study all reported a period of non-violence of greater than one year, the long-term stability of the changes remains to be seen. Informants themselves spoke of the risk of slipping into old patterns and, although they appeared to be vigilant and attentive to evidence of abuse, this could not be determined without long-term follow-up.

Finally, the results of the current study must be

considered in light of the current social, political, and legal climate in the community in which the data were obtained. The problem of wife battering has received a great deal of attention from the local media as well as activists and civic government in recent years. In 1990 a Mayor's Task Force on Violence in the Family was established and Calgary has been acknowledged as a leader in the area in terms of police education and intervention, crisis response, and shelter-sponsored treatment for batterers. This community's general level of alertness to the problem of wife abuse might be higher than that in other Canadian cities.

Implications for Treatment

The results of the present investigation allow for a measure of **cautious** optimism with respect to the ability of men who abuse their partners to make significant behavioural and attitudinal changes. As stated earlier, it must be recognized that these couples represent the exception rather than the rule. Their stories clearly demonstrate, however, that change of a transformational nature is possible and underscore the importance of making treatment programs available.

The value of group treatment focused on issues related to abuse was emphasized repeatedly. The support, validation, and confrontation experienced in the group was central to the recovery of men and women. For both men and women, bringing their stories out of isolation was powerfully healing. Men, in particular, spoke of the difficulty and importance of developing trusting relationships with the men in their group.

Although all five couples were living together at the time of their involvement in therapy, they unanimously emphasized the importance of separate treatment. It was critical, they felt, to remain focused on individual goals

and "work on themselves" during the initial phases of the change process. Women felt that, early in the upward spiral, they were still vulnerable to their partners' manipulative efforts and could have allowed their focus of attention to shift to him had they not had the support of the women in their group.

One of the five couples went on to participate in a couple's communication group after completing separate group programs. They both spoke positively about this experience and described the benefits of learning healthier ways of communicating with each other. The couple's group served as a useful follow-up to their short-term group therapy.

As stated earlier, informants agree that the change process is long-term. This finding is well-supported (Adams, 1989; Gondolf & Hanneken, 1987; Jennings, 1990). Gondolf's (1987) comparison of the process of change for batterers with Kohlberg's (1981) stages of moral development is both theoretically and clinically intriguing. The results of the present study show a process of transformation similar to that described by Gondolf (1987b). That is, men move from denial and minimization, toward acceptance of responsibility for the abuse, to the demonstration of respect and empathy for their partner, to a concern for the broader community. Gondolf describes a three stage developmental model including denial (defiance, self-justification), behavioural change (self-change, relationship building), and personal transformation (community service) (1987b, p. 340). Treatment responses should, according to Gondolf, vary according to the developmental stage of the batterer. The model described in the present study supports both the long-term and multidimensional nature of the process underscored by Gondolf's model.

The men in this study emphasized the "essence" of the

group experience more than the skills or information gained. It is clear, however, that both are important. These men utilize the skills of time out, cognitive self-modification, and communication that they were taught in the group. They speak of having "tools" that they didn't have before. It has been their increased awareness of the broader social and cultural issues related to abuse of women, however, that has enabled them to move beyond behavioural change. Clearly, comprehensive treatment programs are necessary.

Similarly, women benefit from programs that address the broad issues related to the culture of patriarchy as well as particular skills such as assertiveness. It must be emphasized, however, that assertive behaviour in the context of ongoing abuse, could place a woman at risk. Shelter workers and group leaders play an important role in the validation and empowerment of women such that they are able to place their own safety as a priority. Notably, those women who were directed to leave an abusive partner, rejected both the advice and the service provided by the person who offered the advice.

Implications for Research

Throughout the process of this investigation several important questions have emerged. Further research in the area is clearly indicated.

Firstly, as stated above, long-term studies should be undertaken. In light of the complexity of the problem of wife abuse, and the long-term nature of recovery, current studies which evaluate the situation six months or a year after treatment are obviously limited.

Secondly, various therapeutic modalities should be compared to determine those elements of treatment that are most effective. In light of the unanimous support for group therapy, the question of "what happens in group?" should be addressed.

Thirdly, further consideration should be given to developing effective ways of assessing "types of batterers" and hence, designing interventions appropriate to those types. The men who participated in the present study would appear to fit Gondolf's (1988b) Type 3 batterer, those that he considers to be most amenable to counselling intervention. Clearly, these successful outcomes represent the minority with respect to the total number of men who abuse their partners and even of those who enter treatment. The high rates of attrition and recidivism associated with most batterer treatment programs point to the need for a multi-level response including the police and criminal justice systems, women's shelters, and counselling services.

Fourthly, the present study explored the process of change for couples who remain together. For most couples, however, the turning point marks the termination of the relationship. It would be interesting to ascertain whether or not men and women who separate would describe a similar process of recovery.

Finally, the similarities between wife abuse and substance abuse have been delineated (Jennings, 1990). Jennings states that for both "problems," "there is an aversive overt behaviour (intoxication/violence) that rests upon an unseen covert constellation of distorted attitudes, values, and lifestyle habits" (p. 50). He suggests that, like substance abuse treatment, batterer treatment should be considered a long-term process if the aim is to get beneath the "tip-of-the-iceberg" (ie. violent acts) to alter the underlying problems. Future research could determine the applicability of the model derived from the present study to the process of substance abuse recovery.

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Appendix A

INFORMATION

PROJECT: Ending Wife Abuse: Couples' Reflections on the Change Process

INVESTIGATOR: Debra McDougall, M.Ed. C.Psych.

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Don Sawatzky, Ph.D. C. Psych., University of Alberta

The purpose of the above-named study is to gain an understanding of the process of change that occurs in marital and family relationships when a husband discontinues his assaultive behaviour. Information will be gathered from interviews with both husbands and wives who declare that there is no longer any abuse of the woman and who continue to identify themselves as a couple.

While it is recognized that the participants may not benefit directly from their involvement in the study, we anticipate that the experience will be interesting and hope that the information they offer might be helpful for other couples.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and will involve at least two one-to-one interviews with the investigator Ms. McDougall. In addition one interview including both husband and wife will take place. Interviews will last approximately one hour and will be spaced over several months. The contents of all discussions will be kept confidential. In the final report all identifying information will be removed.

The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed into written form which will be coded by number rather than name. All tapes will be erased at the end of the project. Participants will have the opportunity to read a typed copy of their interview and add further information if they desire. Participants will only have access to their own transcripts but will be able to see the final results of the study.

Participants are free to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty or repercussions. During the interviews they do not have to answer any questions or discuss any topic that they do not wish to. They may end an interview at any time. It is recognized that the interviews might trigger traumatic memories emotional distress. Referral to a professional will be made should the need arise. In addition, should the investigator become aware of violence occurring in the relationship, she will discontinue the couple's involvement in the study.

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT: Ending Wife Abuse: Couples' Reflections on the Change Process

INVESTIGATOR: Debra McDougall, M.Ed. C. Psych.

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Don Sawatzky, Ph.D. C. Psych., University of Alberta

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the process of change that occurs in marital and family relationships when a husband discontinues his assaultive behaviour.

I, _____, agree to participate in the above-named research project. I understand that my involvement includes at least two one-to-one conversations with Ms. McDougall lasting approximately one hour as well as one interview including both me and my partner.

I am aware that the contents of discussions with Ms. McDougall will be kept confidential. I give permission for the interviews to be audiotaped and transcribed and understand that the transcriptions will be coded by number rather than name. All tapes will be erased at the end of the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty and that I do not have to discuss any topic I do not wish to.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher and am satisfied that they have been answered sufficiently. I understand that I am free to ask questions that may arise during the course of the project.

_____ _____

PARTICIPANT INVESTIGATOR

_____ _____

WITNESS DATE